

The "Teaching of English" Series

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THE PLEASANT LAND OF
ENGLAND

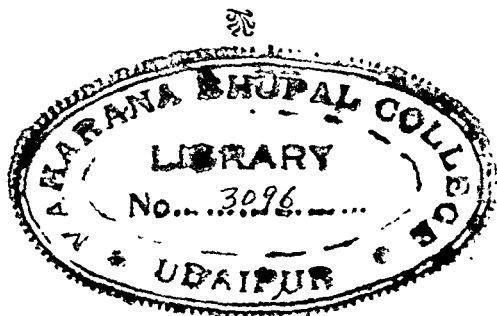


JOHN CLARE

*From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson*

THE PLEASANT LAND OF ENGLAND

*An Anthology of the
English Countryside*
Compiled by
L. S. WOOD
and
H. L. BURROWS



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	vii	WILLIAM COWPER	
THOMAS CAMPION		Yardley Oak	57
Jack and Joan	11	WILLIAM GILPIN	
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE		Sunrise and Sunset in the	
Forest Life (<i>As You Like</i>		Forest (<i>Forest Scenery</i>)	59
<i>It</i>)	12	GEORGE CRABBE	
A Moonlight Sonata (<i>The</i>		Autumn in East Anglia	
<i>Merchant of Venice</i>)	13	(<i>Tales of the Hall</i>)	61
Songs (various Plays)	14	An English Fen (<i>Tales</i>)	62
The Shepherd's Happy		ROBERT BURNS	
Lot (<i>King Henry VI.</i>)	15	To a Mountain Daisy	63
A Flower Scene (<i>Winter's</i>		JOANNA BAILLIE	
<i>Tale</i>)	16	The Cottage Kitten	64
FRANCIS BACON		ROBERT BLOOMFIELD	
The Scents of Flowers		Harvest (<i>The Farmer's</i>	
(<i>Essays: "Of Gardens"</i>)	17	Boy)	66
ROBERT HERRICK		The Gander (<i>The Farmer's</i>	
The Hock-Cart (<i>Hesperides</i>)	18	Boy)	68
JOHN MILTON		The Bird Boy (<i>The Farm-</i>	
The Flowers (<i>Lycidas</i>)	20	<i>er's Boy</i>)	68
IZAACK WALTON		Acorning the Pigs (<i>The</i>	
Nature and Breeding of		<i>Farmer's Boy</i>)	69
the Trout (<i>Compleat</i>		The Fakenham Ghost	70
<i>Angler</i>)	21	JAMES HOGG	
Of the Luce or Pike (<i>Com-</i>		The Skylark	73
<i>pleat Angler</i>)	33	WILLIAM COBBETT	
CHARLES COTTON		Woodland Countries (<i>Ru-</i>	
Evening Quatrains	38	<i>ral Rides</i>)	74
DANIEL DEFOE		"Far Kentish Hopfields"	
Dog Friendship (<i>Robinson</i>		(<i>Rural Rides</i>)	75
<i>Crusoe</i>)	39	St. Swithin (<i>Rural Rides</i>)	76
JAMES THOMSON		Reminiscences (<i>Rural</i>	
January (<i>The Seasons</i>)	40	<i>Rides</i>)	77
The Robin (<i>The Seasons</i>)	41	Game (<i>Rural Rides</i>)	78
GILBERT WHITE		WILLIAM WORDSWORTH	
The Parish of Selborne		The Sparrow's Nest	83
(<i>Natural History</i>)	42	To a Butterfly	83
The Flight of Birds (<i>Natu-</i>		The Shepherd's Son	85
<i>ral History</i>)	45	The Mountain Tarn	86
The Raven Tree (<i>Natural</i>		Reflection	87
<i>History</i>)	47	Trout-fishing	88
Earthworms (<i>Natural</i>		Helvellyn Fair	89
<i>History</i>)	48	JOHN KEATS	
Owls (<i>Natural History</i>)	50	I Stood Tip-toe upon a	
The Field-Cricket (<i>Natu-</i>		Little Hill	92
<i>ral History</i>)	52	JOHN CLARE	
Short Passages (<i>Natural</i>		Sport in the Meadows	95
<i>History</i>)	54	In Hilly-Wood	97

Little Trotty Wagtail	97	The Battle of the Ants (Walden)	155
Clock-a-Clay	98	Winter Animals (Walden)	156
Birds in Alarm	98	R. D. BLACKMORE	
Signs of Winter	99	Catching Loaches (Lorna Doone)	163
Spring's Messengers	99	The East Wind (Lorna Doone)	168
Insects	100	Spring (Lorna Doone)	171
A Country Letter	100	A Summer Morning (Lorna Doone)	172
Grasshoppers	101	Harvest (Lorna Doone)	174
Fir-Woods	102	T. E. BROWN	
The Ants	102	Norton Wood	183
Jane	102	Milk! Milk! Milk!	184
The Farmer's Boy	103	A Bough of May	184
Bonny Mary O!	103	Old John	185
The Sulk-Boy	104	Vespers	186
MARY RUSSELL MITFORD		MATILDA BETHAM-EDWARDS	
Sheep-washing (<i>Our Vil- lage</i>)	106	Cart-horses	186
HARTLEY COLFIDGE		The Harvest Moon	187
November	107	"Never No More"	189
GEORGE BOPPOW		THOMAS HADY	
A Wind on the Heath (<i>Lancaster</i>)	108	Egdon Heath (<i>Return of the Native</i>)	193
Night in the Dingle (<i>Lan- caster</i>)	110	ANNA BUNSTON DE BARY	
Barn at Stonehenge (<i>Lancaster</i>)	114	The Snowdrop	197
WILLIAM BARNES		RICHARD JEFFRIES	
The Shepherd o' the Fenn	120	Rocks and their Ways (<i>Wild Life</i>)	198
False Friends- <i>Life</i>	122	Snakes, Frogs, and Toads (<i>Wild Life</i>)	222
Hot-Carriage	122	DEAN HOLE	
Matrimony Wedded	123	The Origin of the National Rose Show (<i>Memories of Dean Hole</i>)	235
The Weibshut Tree	124	John Leach on the Hunt- ing-field (<i>Memories of Dean Hole</i>)	237
The Milk-maid o' the Fenn	125	KATHARINE TAYNAN HINE- SON	
SAMUEL SMITH		The Cherish	238
Capture of an Adder (<i>Life of a Scotch Natu- ralist</i>)	126	VISCOUNT GREY	
A Naturalist's Self-Edu- cation (<i>Life of a Scotch Naturalist</i>)	129	Another World (<i>Fly-Fish- ing</i>)	240
Mac-a-Wan-lers (<i>Life of a Scotch Naturalist</i>)	131	W. H. HUDSON	
Edwin's Love of Nature (<i>Life of a Scotch Natu- ralist</i>)	141	The Young Cuckoo (<i>Birds in a Pinch</i>)	242
H. D. THOMAS		COURTESY RIVERS	243
Poling the Horse Pasture	143	ENGEL	246
The Pond-lily (<i>Walden</i>)	149	ORIGINATION AND SLOTTING TIONS	247
The Pond-lily (<i>Walden</i>)	151		

INTRODUCTION

THIS is not a text-book of Nature Study, though it may well be a complement to one. The aim of the compilers is to introduce their readers to some of the classics of the countryside; to White and Walton, Cobbett, Borrow, and Blackmore, Crabbe and Wordsworth, Clare and Bloomfield, Barnes, and, in our own day, Hudson and Jefferies.

The principle of choice followed in the present volume has been to select descriptions of Nature that are presented with so vivid a sense of the relation of detail to the whole that, like those Dutch interiors that reveal so much more than they portray, they make a picture; descriptions so vitalized by the emotion of their authors that they become a communicable experience, and others made living by the presence (or consciously felt absence) of humanity. Herrick's "To Meadows,"—

"Ye *have* been fresh and green,
Ye *have* been filled with flowers,
And ye the walks have been
Where maids have spent their hours,"

is an example of the last class. Pieces of mere description without such vitalizing factors, and reflective passages, have been avoided. "We want," as Sir Leslie Stephen said, "the birds' song, not the emotions which it excites on our abnormally sensitive natures." The compilers have sought to point out paths and to open up vistas rather than to travel far on any particular road. Indeed they have not, save in the case of Thoreau; travelled outside "the pleasant land of England," and have for this reason resisted the temptation of including any of those matchless pictures of animal life across the Atlantic drawn by Mr. William J. Long, who, like our own Hudson, passed beyond the desire to kill and to

collect, and was content to travel with a pair of binoculars instead of a gun.

Through the ages poets have discerned and appreciated natural beauty. But that pleasure in the country which is now a common thing is not of long standing in England. In the sixteenth century the garden was the ideal of outdoor beauty, and this taste persisted through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The pure soul of Bunyan found pleasure in natural scenery, as did the simple mind of the courtly Sir Roger de Coverley. But, traveller as he was, Defoe had no admiration either for the fine country of Hindhead or for the beauties of the Lakeland mountains: barren deserts he called the first, and wondered how such a Sahara could exist so near to London; of the second he entertained a positive fear: "We entered Westmoreland, a country eminent only for being the wildest, most barren and frightful of any that I have passed over in England, or even in Wales itself. The West side, which borders on Cumberland, is indeed bounded by a chain of almost unpassable mountains. . . . But 'tis of no advantage to the character of a country to describe it in all its frightful appearances." This was in 1725. But as the eighteenth century went on admiration of natural scenery became more common. White's *Natural History of Selborne* (1759) and William Gilpin's rather more florid *Picturesque Tours* (appearing at intervals from 1778-1798) opened the eyes of many, and profoundly influenced literature. We think, not incorrectly, of Wordsworth as having discovered the Lakes. He did so; for though they began to be explored and described about the year of his birth (1770), he was the first to touch them with genuine emotion. But Wordsworth had forerunners in Thomson, the author of *The Seasons*; Crabbe, who was an expert botanist; Cowper, Goldsmith, and Gray. Gray was not only a fervent admirer of the mountain scenery of Cumberland and Westmoreland; he had a sheer and gleaming admiration of the men who *did* things, whether on the Fells or in the more agricultural parts of England:

"How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!"

In Gray sound the cheery breeziness of rural England—the cheeriness that inspired the youthful Milton,

who, with admiration as frank and as infectious, makes us gaze—

“While the ploughman near at hand
Whistles o’er the furrow’d land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.”

For the inclusion of copyright matter our thanks are due and are hereby tendered to Mrs. Anna Bunston de Bary, for “The Snowdrop,” from *Lyrics*; Mrs. Katharine Tynan Hinkson, for “The Choice”; Viscount Grey of Fallodon and Messrs. J. M. Dent and Sons, for “Another World,” from *Fly-Fishing*; Mr. Thomas Hardy and Messrs. Macmillan, for “Egdon Heath,” from *The Return of the Native*; Messrs. Edward Arnold, for the extracts from *Memories of Dean Hole*; Messrs. J. M. Dent and Sons, for “The Young Cuckoo,” from W. H. Hudson’s *Birds in a Village*; Messrs. Macmillan, for the poems by T. E. Brown; Mr. John Murray, for extracts from Richard Jefferies’ *Wild Life in a Southern County*, and Samuel Smiles’ *Life of a Scotch Naturalist*; and the Oxford University Press, for the poems by William Barnes, and for “Cart-horses,” “The Harvest Moon,” and “Never no more,” from Miss Betham-Edwards’ *The Lord of the Harvest* (*The World’s Classics*, No. 194). Acknowledgments are also due to Mr. R. Cobden Sanderson for permission to reprint certain poems by John Clare, from Messrs. Blunden and Porter’s recent edition of the works of that poet.

L. S. W.
H. L. B.

CHELTENHAM.

The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground :
Yea, I have a goodly heritage.

Psalm xvi.

. . . This little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall . . .
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.

SHAKESPEARE : *King Richard II.*

God Almighty first Planted a Garden. And indeed it is the Purest of Human pleasures. It is the Greatest Refreshment to the Spirits of Man ; Without which, Buildings and Pallaces are but Grosse Handy-works : And a man shall ever see that, when Ages grow to Civility and Elegancie, Men come to Build Stately sooner than to Garden Finely : As if Gardening were the Greater Perfection.

BACON : *Essay xlv., Of Gardens.*

THE PLEASANT LAND OF ENGLAND

THOMAS CAMPION

[The first of Thomas Campion's four *Bookes of Ayres* appeared in 1601, and most of his lyrics were set to music of his own composition. The very titles of two of the best known show his love of Nature: "There is a Garden in her Face," and "Now Winter Nights Enlarge."]

JACK AND JOAN

JACK and Joan, they think no ill,
But loving live, and, merry still,
Do their week-days' work, and pray
Devoutly on the holy day;
Skip and trip it on the green,
And help to choose the Summer Queen;
Lash out at a country feast
Their silver penny with the best.

Well can they judge of nappy ale,
And tell at large a winter tale;
Climb up to the apple loft,
And turn the crabs till they be soft.
Tib is all the father's joy,
And little Tom the mother's boy;
All their pleasure is Content;
And care, to pay their yearly rent.

Joan can tell by name her cows,
And deck her windows with green boughs;

She can wreaths and tutties make,
And trim with plums a bridal cake.
Jack knows what brings gain or loss ;
And his long flail can stoutly toss :
Makes the hedge which others break,
And ever thinks what he doth speak.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

[Shakespeare, though a dramatist dealing chiefly with the varied ways of men, had a wondrous gift both of seeing and describing the beauties of Nature. His plays abound in pictures of rural life and scenes that reveal the seeing eye and the understanding heart.]

FOREST LIFE

[From *As You Like It*. The banished Duke speaks.]

Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?
Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,
The seasons' difference, as the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
Which, when it bites and blows upon my body,
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say,
"This is no flattery; these are counsellors
That feelingly persuade me what I am."
Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
And this our life exempt from public haunt
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.
I would not change it.

A MOONLIGHT SONATA

[From *The Merchant of Venice*.]

[Enter LORENZO and JESSICA.]

Lor. The moon shines bright: in such a night as this,
 When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees
 And they did make no noise, in such a night
 Troilus methinks mounted the Trojan walls
 And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents,
 Where Cressid lay that night.

Jes. In such a night
 Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew,
 And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,
 And ran dismay'd away.

Lor. In such a night
 Stood Dido with a willow in her hand,
 Upon the wild sea banks, and waft her love
 To come again to Carthage.

Jes. In such a night
 Medea gather'd the enchanted herbs
 That did renew old Æson.

Lor. In such a night
 Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew,
 And with an unthrift love did run from Venice
 As far as Belmont.

Jes. In such a night
 Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well,
 Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,
 And ne'er a true one.

Lor. In such a night
 Did pretty Jessica, like a little shrew,
 Slander her love, and he forgave it her.

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank !
 Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
 Creep in our ears : soft stillness and the night

Become the touches of sweet harmony.
 Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
 Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold :
 There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
 But in his motion like an angel sings,
 Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins ;
 Such harmony is in immortal souls ;
 But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
 Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

SONGS

I

[From *The Tempest*.]

WHERE the bee sucks, there suck I :
 In a cowslip's bell I lie ;
 There I couch when owls do cry.
 On the bat's back I do fly
 After summer merrily.
 Merrily, merrily shall I live now
 Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

II

[From *Love's Labour's Lost* ; altered.]

WHEN daisies pied and violets blue
 And lady-smocks all silver white
 And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
 Do paint the meadows with delight,
 The cuckoo then, on every tree,
 Herald the spring, for thus sings he,
 Cuckoo !

When shepherds pipe on oaten straws
 And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks,
 When turtles build, and rooks and daws,
 And maidens bleach their summer frocks,

The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Heralds the spring, for thus sings he,
Cuckoo !

III

- [From *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.]

I KNOW a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,
Where ox-lips and the nodding violet grows ;
Quite overcanopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine :
There sleeps Titania, some time of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight.

THE SHEPHERD'S HAPPY LOT

[From *King Henry the Sixth*, Part III. The unhappy king muses on a hill o'erlooking the battlefield.]

O God ! methinks it were a happy life,
To be no better than a homely swain ;
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run,
How many make the hour full complete ;
How many hours bring about the day ;
How many days will finish up the year ;
How many years a mortal man may live.
When this is known, then to divide the times :
So many hours must I tend my flock ;
So many hours must I take my rest ;
So many hours must I contemplate ;
So many hours must I sport myself ;
So many days my ewes have been with young ;
So many weeks ere the poor fools will ean ;
So many years ere I shall shear the fleece ;
So minutes, hours, days, months, and years

Pass'd over to the end they were created,
 Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.
 Ah, what a life were this ! how sweet ! how lovely !
 Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade
 To shepherds looking on their silly * sheep
 Than doth a rich embroider'd canopy
 To kings that fear their subjects' treachery ?
 O, yes, it doth ! a thousand-fold it doth.
 And, to conclude, the shepherd's homely curds,
 His cold thin drink out of his leather bottle,
 His wonted sleep under a fresh tree's shade,
 All which secure and sweetly he enjoys,
 Is far beyond a prince's delicates,
 His viands sparkling in a golden cup,
 His body couched in a curious bed,
 When care, mistrust, and treason wait on him.

A FLOWER SCENE

[From *The Winter's Tale*.]

O Proserpina,
 For the flowers now, that, frightened, thou lett'st fall
 From Dis's waggon ! daffodils
 That come before the swallow dares, and take
 The winds of March with beauty ; violets dim,
 But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
 Or Cytherea's breath ; pale primroses,
 That die unmarried, ere they can behold
 Bright Phœbus in his strength ; bright ox-lips and
 The crown imperial ; lilies of all kinds,
 The flower-de-luce being one ! . . .

Come, take your flowers :
 Methinks I play as I have seen them do
 In Whitsun pastorals.

* Innocent.

FRANCIS BACON

[The many-sided genius of Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam and Viscount St. Albans, who was a prominent Member of Parliament in Elizabeth's reign and rose to be Lord Chancellor under James I., included profound interest in science and in Nature. This passage is taken from his essay *Of Gardens*, of which the opening words are given on page x. No writer ever packed more matter into few words than Bacon. His essays have been called jottings "of a nature whereof a man shall find much in experience but little in books."]

THE SCENTS OF FLOWERS

THE breath of flowers is far sweeter in the air (where it comes and goes like the warbling of music) than in the hand . . . Roses damask and red are fast flowers of their smells, so that you may walk by a whole row of them and find nothing of their sweetness ; yea, though it be in a morning's dew. Bays likewise yield no smell as they grow. Rosemary little ; nor sweet marjoram. That which above all others yields the sweetest smell in the air is the violet, specially the white double-violet, which comes twice a year, about the middle of April and about Bartholomew-tide. Next to that is the musk-rose. Then the strawberry-leaves dying, which yield a most excellent cordial smell . . . Then sweet briar. Then wall-flowers, which are very delightful to be set under a parlour or lower chamber window. Then pinks and gilly-flowers, specially the matted pink and clove gilly-flowers. Then the flowers of the lime-tree. Then the honey-suckles, so they be somewhat afar off. Of bean flowers I speak not, because they are field flowers. But those which perfume the air most delightfully, not passed by as the rest, but being trodden upon and crushed, are three : that is burnet, wild thyme and water-mints.

ROBERT HERRICK

[Robert Herrick (1591-1634) held the living of Dean Prior in Devonshire. His poems are full of country life, and echo the song of birds : they smell of April, May, and June. In "The Argument of his Book" (*Hesperides*, from which this poem is taken), he writes, in lines which are the very quintessence of poetry,

I sing of Brooks, of Blossomes, Birds and Bowers :
Of April, May, of June, and July-Flowers.
I sing of May-poles, Hock-carts, Wassails, Wakes,
Of Bride-grooms, Brides, and of their Bridall-cakes . . .
I sing of Times trans-shifting ; and I write
How Roses first came Red, and Lillies White.

He also writes of his "private wealth," his pet lamb, his goose that "tells what danger's neare," his cat, and his spaniel, Tracy.]

THE HOCK-CART, OR HARVEST HOME

To the Right Honourable Mildmay, Earle of Westmorland

COME, Sons of Summer, by whose toile
We are the Lords of Wine and Oile ;
By whose tough labours and rough hands
We rip up first, then reap our lands.
Crown'd with the eares of corne, now come,
And, to the pipe, sing Harvest home.
Come forth, my Lord, and see the Cart
Drest up with all the Country Art.
See, here a Maukin,* there a sheet,
As spotlesse pure as it is sweet :
The Horses, Mares, and frisking Fillies
(Clad, all, in Linnen, white as Lillies),
The Harvest Swaines, and Wenches bound
For joy, to see the Hock-cart crown'd.
About the Cart, heare, how the Rout
Of Rurall Younglings raise the shout ;
Pressing before, some coming after,

* A cloth.

Those with a shout, and these with laughter.
Some blesse the Cart ; some kisse the sheaves ;
Some prank them up with Oaken leaves :
Some crosse the Fill-horse ; some with great
Devotion stroak the home-borne wheat :
While other Rusticks, lesse attent
To Prayers then to Merrymment,
Run after with their breeches rent.
Well, on, brave boyes, to your Lord's Hearth,
Glitt'ring with fire ; where, for your mirth,
Ye shall see first the large and cheefe
Foundation of your Feast, Fat Beefe :
With Upper Stories, Mutton, Veale
And Bacon (which makes full the meale),
With sev'rall dishes standing by,
As here a Custard, there a Pie,
And here all-tempting Frumentie.
And for to make the merry cheere,
If smirking Wine be wanting here,
There's that which drowns all care, stout Beere ;
Which freely drink to your Lord's health,
Then to the Plough (the Common-wealth),
Next to your Flailes, your Fanes, your Fatts ;
Then to the Maids with Wheaten Hats :
To the rough Sickle and crookt Sythe,
Drink, frolick, boyes, till all be blythe.
Feed and grow fat ; and as ye eat
Be mindful that the lab'ring Neat
(As you) may have their fill of meat.
And know, besides, ye must revoke
The patient Oxe unto the Yoke,
And all goe back unto the Plough
And Harrow, (though they're hang'd up now).
And, you must know, your Lord's words true,
Feed him ye must, whose food fils you.
And that this pleasure is like raine,
Not sent ye for to drowne your paine,
But for to make it spring againe.

ROBERT HERRICK

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Feed and grow fat ; and as ye eat
Be mindful that the lab'ring Neat
(As you) may have their fill of meat.
And know, besides, ye must revoke
The patient Oxe unto the Yoke,
And all goe back unto the Plough
And Harrow, (though they're hang'd up now).
And, you must know, your Lord's words true,
Feed him ye must, whose food fils you.
And that this pleasure is like raine,
Not sent ye for to drowne your paine,
But for to make it spring againe.

JOHN MILTON

[Milton was a great scholar. But if he sometimes viewed Nature (which he loved) through classical spectacles, in his *Tractate on Education* he advised pupils to "procure, as oft as shall be needful, the helpful experience of hunters, fowlers, fishermen, shepherds, gardeners," and declared that "in those vernal seasons of the year when the air is calm and pleasant, it were an injury and sullenness against Nature not to go out and see her riches, and partake in her rejoicing with heaven and earth"]

THE FLOWERS

[From *Lycidas*.]

. . . CALL the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells, and flow'rets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honied show'rs,
And purple all the ground with vernal flow'rs.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freakt with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attir'd woodbine ;
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears :
Bid Amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureat hearse where Lycid lies.

IZAAK WALTON

[*The Compleat Angler, or The Contemplative Man's Recreation*, was first published in 1653. Its author, Izaak Walton, was a prosperous retired London tradesman, and a friend of many of the notable writers of that time. Walton himself thought that his book might, perhaps, reach a second edition ; but the quaint grace of his style has delighted countless readers, anglers and non-anglers alike, and more than a hundred editions have been issued.

There is a slender thread of narrative running through the book. Piscator (*i.e.*, the Fisherman), walking out beyond Tottenham Hill early one fresh May morning on his way to Ware, overtakes Venator (the Hunter) and Anceps (the Falconer). The three converse on sport, each extolling his own. Piscator and Venator are so charmed with each other's society that after Piscator has spent a day with his friend watching an otter hunt, he devotes the next two days to instructing Venator in the noble art of angling.]

OF THE NATURE AND BREEDING OF THE TROUT, AND HOW TO FISH FOR HIM

Piscator. The Trout is a fish highly valued, both in this and foreign nations. He may be justly said, as the old poet said of wine, and we English say of venison, to be a generous fish ; a fish that is so like the buck, that he also has his seasons ; for it is observed that he comes in and goes out of season with the stag and buck : Gesner says his name is of a German offspring, and says he is a fish that feeds clean and purely in the swiftest streams and on the hardest gravel ; and that he may justly contend with all fresh-water fish, as the Mullet may with all sea fish, for precedence and daintiness of taste ; and that being in right season, the most dainty palates have allowed precedence to him.

And before I go farther in my discourse, let me tell you, that you are to observe, that as there be some barren does that are good in summer, so there be some barren Trouts that are good in winter; but there are not so many that are so, for usually they be in their perfection in the month of May, and decline with the buck. Now you are to take notice, that in several countries, as in Germany, and in other parts, compared to ours, fish do differ much in their bigness, and shape, and other ways, and so do Trouts. It is well known that in the Lake Lemán, the Lake of Geneva, there are Trouts taken of three cubits long, as is affirmed by Gesner, a writer of good credit; and Mercator says, the Trouts that are taken in the Lake of Geneva are a great part of the merchandize of that famous city. And you are further to know, that there be certain waters that breed Trouts, remarkable both for their number and smallness. I know a little brook in Kent, that breeds them to a number incredible, and you may take them twenty or forty in an hour, but none greater than about the size of a Gudgeon; there are also, in divers rivers, especially that relate to, or be near to the sea, as Winchester, or the Thames about Windsor, a little Trout called a Samlet, or Skegger Trout; in both which places I have caught twenty or forty at a standing, that will bite as fast and as freely as Minnows; these be by some taken to be young Salmons, but in those waters they never grow to be bigger than a Herring.

There is also in Kent, near to Canterbury, a Trout called there a Fordidge Trout, a Trout that bears the name of the town where it is usually caught, that is accounted the rarest of fish; many of them near the bigness of a Salmon, but known by their different colour, and in their best season they cut very white; and none of these have been known to be caught with an angle, unless it were one that was caught by Sir George Hastings, an excellent angler, and now

with God; and he hath told me, he thought that Trout bit not for hunger but wantonness; and it is the rather to be believed, because both he, then, and many others before him, have been curious to search into their bellies, what the food was by which they lived; and have found out nothing by which they might satisfy their curiosity.

Concerning which you are to take notice, that it is reported by good authors, that grasshoppers and some fish have no mouths, but are nourished and take breath by the porousness of their gills, man knows not how; and this may be believed, if we consider that when the raven hath hatched her eggs, she takes no further care, but leaves her young ones to the care of the God of Nature, who is said in the Psalms, "to feed the young ravens that call upon him." And they be kept alive and fed by a dew, or worms that breed in their nests; or some other ways that we mortals know not; * and this may be believed of the Fordidge Trout, which, as it is said of the stork, that he knows his season, so he knows his times, I think almost his day of coming into that river out of the sea, where he lives, and, it is like, feeds nine months of the year, and fasts three in the river of Fordidge. And you are to note, that those townsmen are very punctual in observing the time of beginning to fish for them; and boast much that their river affords a Trout that exceeds all others. And just so does Sussex boast of several fish; as, namely, a Shelsey Cockle, a Chichester Lobster, an Arundel Mullet, and an Amerley Trout.

And now for some confirmation of the Fordidge Trout: you are to know that this Trout is thought to eat nothing in the fresh water; and it may be the better believed, because it is well known, that swallows, and bats, and wagtails, which are called half-

* The reader will bear in mind that Walton is not to be taken as a reliable authority on birds, or, indeed, on everything relating to fish.

year birds, and not seen to fly in England for six months in the year, but about Michaelmas leave us for a hotter climate ; yet some of them that have been left behind their fellows, have been found, many thousands at a time, in hollow trees, or clay caves ; where they have been observed to live and sleep out the whole winter without meat. And so Albertus observes, that there is one kind of frog that hath her mouth naturally shut up about the end of August, and that she lives so all the winter : and though it be strange to some, yet it is known to too many among us to be doubted.

And so much for these Fordidge Trouts, which never afford an angler sport, but either live their time of being in the fresh water, by their meat formerly gotten in the sea, not unlike the swallow or frog, or by the virtue of the fresh water only ; or as the birds of Paradise and the cameleon are said to live, by the sun and the air.

There is also in Northumberland a Trout called a Bull-Trout, of a much greater length and bigness than any in these southern parts ; and there are, in many rivers that relate to the sea, Salmon-Trouts, as much different from others, both in shape and in their spots, as we see sheep in some countries differ one from another in their shape and bigness, and in the fineness of their wool : and, certainly, as some pastures breed larger sheep, so do some rivers, by reason of the ground over which they run, breed larger Trouts.

Now the next thing that I will commend to your consideration is, that the Trout is of a more sudden growth than other fish ; concerning which, you are also to take notice, that he lives not so long as the Peach, and divers other fishes do, as Sir Francis Bacon hath observed in his *History of Life and Death*.

And next you are to take notice, that he is not like the Crocodile, which if he lives never so long, yet always thrives till his death : but it is not so with the Trout ;

for after he is come to his full growth; he declines in his body, and keeps his bigness, or thrives only in his head till his death. And you are to know, that he will, about, (especially before,) the time of his spawning, get almost miraculously through weirs and flood-gates against the streams, even through such high and swift places as is almost incredible. Next, that the Trout usually spawns about October or November, but in some rivers a little sooner or later ; which is the more observable, because most other fish spawn in the spring or summer, when the sun hath warmed both the earth and water, and made it fit for generation. And you are to note, that he continues many months out of season : for it may be observed of the Trout, that he is like the buck or the ox, that will not be fat in many months, though he go in the very same pastures that horses do, which will be fat in one month ; and so you may observe, that most other fishes recover strength, and grow sooner fat and in season than the Trout doth.

And next you are to note, that till the sun gets to such a height as to warm the earth and the water, the Trout is sick, and lean, and lousy, and unwholesome ; for you shall in winter find him to have a big head, and then to be lank, and thin, and lean ; at which time many of them have sticking on them sugs, or Trout-lice, which is a kind of a worm, in shape like a clove, or pin with a big head, and sticks close to him, and sucks his moisture ; those, I think, the Trout breeds himself, and never thrives till he free himself from them, which is when warm weather comes ; and then, as he grows stronger, he gets from the dead still water, into the sharp streams and the gravel, and there rubs off these worms or lice ; and then, as he grows stronger, so he gets him into swifter and swifter streams, and there lies at the watch for any fly or minnow that comes near to him ; and he especially loves the May-fly, which is bred of the cod-worm, or cadis ; and these make the Trout bold and lusty ; and he is

usually fatter and better meat at the end of that month than at any time of the year.

Now you are to know that it is observed, that usually the best Trouts are either red or yellow ; though some, as the Fordidge Trout, be white and yet good ; but that is not usual : and it is a note observable, that the female Trout hath usually a less head, and a deeper body than the male Trout, and is usually the better meat ; and note, that a hog back, and a little head, to either Trout, Salmon, or any other fish, is a sign that that fish is in season.

But yet you are to note, that as you see some willows or palm-trees bud and blossom sooner than others do, so some Trouts be, in rivers, sooner in season ; and as some hollies or oaks are longer before they cast their leaves, so are some Trouts, in rivers, longer before they go out of season.

And you are to note, that there are several kinds of Trouts, but these several kinds are not considered but by very few men, for they go under the general name of Trouts ; just as pigeons do in most places ; though it is certain there are tame and wild pigeons ; and of the tame, there be helmits and runts, and carriers and coppers, and indeed too many to name. Nay, the Royal Society have found and published lately, that there be thirty and three kinds of spiders ; and yet all, for aught I know, go under that one general name of spider. And it is so with many kinds of fish, and of Trouts especially, which differ in their bigness, and shape, and spots, and colour. The great Kentish hens may be an instance, compared to other hens ; and, doubtless, there is a kind of small Trout, which will never thrive to be big, that breeds very many more than others do, that be of a larger size ; which you may rather believe, if you consider that the little wren and titmouse will have twenty young ones at a time, when usually the noble hawk, or the musical thrassel or blackbird, exceed not four or five.

And now you shall see me try my skill to catch a Trout ; and at my next walking, either this evening or to-morrow morning, I will give you direction how you yourself shall fish for him.

Venator. Trust me, master, I see now it is a harder matter to catch a Trout than a Chub ; for I have put on patience, and followed you these two hours, and not seen a fish stir, neither at your minnow nor your worm.

Piscator. Well, scholar, you must endure worse luck sometime, or you will never make a good angler. But what say you now ? there is a Trout now, and a good one too, if I can but hold him ; and two or three turns more will tire him : now you see he lies still, and the sleight is to land him : reach me that landing-net : so, Sir, now he is mine own, what say you now, is not this worth all my labour and your patience ?

Venator. On my word, master, this is a gallant Trout ; what shall we do with him ?

Piscator. Marry, e'en eat him to supper : we'll go to my hostess from whence we came ; she told me, as I was going out of door, that my brother Peter, a good angler, and a cheerful companion, had sent word he would lodge there to-night, and bring a friend with him. My hostess has two beds, and I know you and I may have the best : we'll rejoice with my brother Peter and his friend, tell tales, or sing ballads, or make a catch, or find some harmless sport to content us, and pass away a little time without offence to God or man.

Venator. A match, good master, let's go to that house, for the linen looks white, and smells of lavender, and I long to lie in a pair of sheets that smell so. Let's be going, good master, for I am hungry again with fishing.

Piscator. Nay, stay a little, good scholar ; I caught my last Trout with a worm ; now I will put on a minnow, and try a quarter of an hour about yonder trees for another, and so walk towards our lodging. Look

you, scholar, thereabout we shall have a bite presently, or not at all. Have with you, Sir ; o' my word I have hold of him. Oh ! it is a great logger-headed Chub ; come, hang him upon that willow twig, and let's be going. But turn out of the way a little, good scholar, toward yonder high honeysuckle hedge ; there we'll sit and sing, whilst this shower falls so gently upon the teeming earth, and gives yet a sweeter smell to the lovely flowers that adorn these verdant meadows.

Look, under that broad beech-tree I sat down, when I was last this way a-fishing, and the birds in the adjoining grove seemed to have a friendly contention with an echo, whose dead voice seemed to live in a hollow tree near to the brow of that primrose-hill ; there I sat viewing the silver streams glide silently towards their centre, the tempestuous sea ; yet sometimes opposed by rugged roots and pebble-stones, which broke their waves, and turned them into foam ; and sometimes I beguiled time by viewing the harmless lambs, some leaping securely in the cool shade, whilst others sported themselves in the cheerful sun. As I thus sat, these and other sights had so fully possessed my soul with content, that I thought, as the poet has happily expressed it,

I was for that time lifted above earth,
And possess joys not promis'd in my birth.

As I left this place, and entered into the next field, a second pleasure entertained me ; 'twas a handsome milkmaid, that had not yet attained so much age and wisdom as to load her mind with any fears of many things that will never be, as too many men too often do ; but she cast away all care, and sung like a nightingale ; her voice was good, and the ditty fitted for it ; it was that smooth song, which was made by Kit Marlow, now at least fifty years ago ; and the milkmaid's mother sung an answer to it,

which was made by Sir Walter Raleigh in his younger days.

They were old-fashioned poetry, but choicely good ; I think much better than the strong lines that are now in fashion in this critical age. Look yonder ! on my word, yonder they both be a-milking again. I will give her the Chub, and persuade them to sing those two songs to us.

God speed you, good woman ! I have been a-fishing ; and am going to Bleak Hall to my bed ; and having caught more fish than will sup myself and my friend, I will bestow this upon you and your daughter, for I use to sell none. . . .

Venator. O my good master, this morning-walk has been spent to my great pleasure and wonder : but, I pray, when shall I have your direction how to make artificial flies, like to those that the Trout loves best, and, also, how to use them ?

Piscator. My honest scholar, it is now past five of the clock ; we will fish till nine, and then go to breakfast. Go you to yonder sycamore-tree, and hide your bottle of drink under the hollow root of it ; for about that time, and in that place, we will make a brave breakfast with a piece of powdered beef, and a radish or two, that I have in my fish-bag ; we shall, I warrant you, make a good, honest, wholesome, hungry breakfast, and I will then give you direction for the making and using of your flies : and in the meantime, there is your rod and line, and my advice is, that you fish as you see me do, and let's try which can catch the first fish.

Venator. I thank you, master, I will observe and practise your direction as far as I am able.

Piscator. Look you, scholar, you see I have hold of a good fish : I now see it is a Trout. I pray, put that net under him, and touch not my line, for if you do, then we break all. Well done, scholar, I thank you.

Now for another. Trust me, I have another bite :

come, scholar, come lay down your rod, and help me to land this as you did the other. So, now we shall be sure to have a good dish of fish for supper.

Venator. I am glad of that ; but I have no fortune ; sure, master, yours is a better rod and better tackling.

Piscator. Nay, then, take mine ; and I will fish with yours. Look you, scholar, I have another. Come, do as you did before. And now I have a bite at another. Oh me ! he has broke all ; there's half a line and a good hook lost.

Venator. Ay, and a good Trout too.

Piscator. Nay, the Trout is not lost ; for pray take notice, no man can lose what he never had.

Venator. Master, I can neither catch with the first nor second angle : I have no fortune.

Piscator. Look you, scholar, I have yet another ; and now, having caught three brace of Trouts, I will tell you a short tale as we walk towards our breakfast. A scholar, a preacher I should say, that was to preach to procure the approbation of a parish that he might be their lecturer, had got from his fellow-pupil the copy of a sermon that was first preached with great commendation by him that composed it ; and though the borrower of it preached it word for word as it was at first, yet it was utterly disliked as it was preached by the second to his congregation ; which the sermon-borrower complained of to the lender of it, and was thus answered : " I lent you indeed my fiddle, but not my fiddle-stick ; for you are to know, that every one cannot make musick with my words, which are fitted for my own mouth." And so, my scholar, you are to know, that as the ill pronunciation or ill accenting of words in a sermon spoils it, so the ill carriage of your line, or not fishing even to a foot in a right place, makes you lose your labour ; and you are to know, that though you have my fiddle, that is, my very rod and tacklings with which you see I catch fish, yet you have not my fiddle-stick ; that is, you yet have not skill to

know how to carry your hand and line, nor how to guide it to a right place; and this must be taught you; for you are to remember, I told you angling is an art, either by practice, or a long observation, or both. But take this for a rule, when you fish for a Trout with a worm, let your line have so much, and not more lead than will fit the stream in which you fish; that is to say, more in a great troublesome stream than in a smaller that is quieter; as near as may be, so much as will sink the bait to the bottom, and keep it still in motion, and not more.

But now let's say grace, and fall to breakfast. What say you, scholar, to the providence of an old angler? does not this meat taste well? and was not this place well chosen to eat it? for this sycamore-tree will shade us from the sun's heat.

Venator. All excellent good, and my stomach excellent good, too. And I now remember and find that true which devout Lessius says, "that poor men, and those that fast often, have much more pleasure in eating than rich men and gluttons, that always feed before their stomachs are empty of their last meat, and call for more: for by that means they rob themselves of that pleasure that hunger brings to poor men." And I do seriously approve of that saying of yours, "that you had rather be a civil, well-governed, well-grounded, temperate, poor angler, than a drunken lord." But I hope there is none such; however, I am certain of this, that I have been at many very costly dinners that have not afforded me half the content that this has done, for which I thank God and you.

Piscator. And now, scholar, I think it will be time to repair to our angle-rods, which we left in the water to fish for themselves; and you shall choose which shall be yours; and it is an even lay, one of them catches.

And let me tell you, this kind of fishing with a dead rod, and laying night-hooks, are like putting money to

use, for they both work for the owners when they do nothing but sleep, or eat, or rejoice, as you know we have done this last hour, and sat as quietly and as free from cares under this sycamore, as Virgil's Tityrus and his Melibœus did under their broad beech-tree. No life, my honest scholar, no life so happy and so pleasant as the life of a well-governed angler; for when the lawyer is swallowed up with business, and the statesman is preventing or contriving plots, then we sit on cowslip-banks, hear the birds sing, and possess ourselves in as much quietness as these silent silver streams, which we now see glide so quietly by us. Indeed, my good scholar, we may say of angling as Dr. Boteler said of strawberries: "Doubtless God could have made a better berry, but doubtless God never did;" and so, if I might be judge, "God never did make a more calm, quiet, innocent recreation than angling."

I'll tell you, scholar, when I sat last on this primrose-bank, and looked down these meadows, I thought of them as Charles the Emperor did of the city of Florence: "That they were too pleasant to be looked on, but only on holy-days." As I then sat on this very grass, I turned my present thoughts into verse: 'twas a wish which I'll repeat to you:—

THE ANGLER'S WISH

I in these flowery meads would be :
 These crystal streams should solace me ;
 To whose harmonious bubbling noise,
 I with my angle would rejoice :
 Sit here, and see the turtle-dove
 Court his chaste mate to acts of love :

Or, on that bank, feel the west wind
 Breathe health and plenty : please my mind,
 To see sweet dew-drops kiss these flowers,
 And then wash'd off by April showers :
 Here, hear my Kenna sing a song,
 There, see a blackbird feed her young,

Or a leverock build her nest ;
 Here, give my weary spirits rest,
 And raise my low-pitch'd thoughts above
 Earth, or what poor mortals love :
 Thus, free from lawsuits and the noise
 Of princes' courts, I would rejoice,

Or, with my Bryan, and a book,
 Loiter long days near Shawford-brook ;
 There sit by him, and eat my meat,
 There see the sun both rise and set :
 There bid good-morning to next day,
 There meditate my time away ;
 And angle on ; and beg to have
 A quiet passage to a welcome grave.

OF THE LUCE OR PIKE

Piscator. The mighty Luce or Pike is taken to be the tyrant, as the Salmon is the king, of the fresh waters. Sir Francis Bacon, in his *History of Life and Death*, observes the Pike to be the longest-lived of any fresh-water fish, and yet he computes it to be not usually above forty years, and others think it to be not above ten years ; and yet Gesner mentions a Pike taken in Swedeland in the year 1449, with a ring about his neck, declaring he was put into that pond by Frederick the Second, more than two hundred years before he was last taken, as by the inscription in that ring, being Greek, was interpreted by the then Bishop of Worms. But of this no more, but that it is observed, that the old or very great Pikes have in them more of state than goodness, the smaller or middle-sized Pikes being by the most and choicest palates observed to be the best meat ; and contrary, the Eel is observed to be the better for age and bigness.

All Pikes that live long prove chargeable to their keepers, because their life is maintained by the death of so many other fish, even those of their own kind ;

which has made him by some writers to be called the tyrant of the rivers, or the fresh-water wolf, by reason of his bold, greedy, devouring disposition ; which is so keen, as Gesner relates, a man going to a pond, where it seems a Pike had devoured all the fish, to water his mule, had a Pike bit his mule by the lips ; to which the Pike hung so fast, that the mule drew him out of the water, and by that accident the owner of the mule angled out the Pike. And the same Gesner observes, that a maid in Poland had a Pike bit her by the foot as she was washing clothes in a pond. And I have heard the like of a woman in Killingworth pond, not far from Coventry. But I have been assured by my friend Mr. Segrave, of whom I spake to you formerly, that keeps tame otters, that he hath known a Pike, in extreme hunger, fight with one of his otters for a Carp that the otter had caught, and was then bringing out of the water. I have told you who relates these things ; and tell you they are persons of credit ; and shall conclude this observation, by telling you what a wise man has observed, " It is a hard thing to persuade the belly, because it has no ears."

But if these relations be disbelieved, it is too evident to be doubted, that a Pike will devour a fish of his own kind that shall be bigger than his belly or throat will receive, and swallow a part of him, and let the other part remain in his mouth till the swallowed part be digested, and then swallow that other part that was in his mouth, and so put it over by degrees ; which is not unlike the ox, and some other beasts taking their meat, not out of their mouth immediately into their belly, but first into some place betwixt, and then chew it, or digest it by degrees after, which is called chewing the cud. And doubtless Pikes will bite when they are not hungry, but, as some think, even for very anger, when a tempting bait comes near to them.

And it is observed, that the Pike will eat venomous
s, as some kind of frogs are, and yet live without

being harmed by them : for, as some say, he has in him a natural balsam, or antidote against all poison : and he has a strange heat, that though it appear to us to be cold, can yet digest or put over any fish-flesh, by degrees, without being sick. And others observe, that he never eats the venomous frog till he have first killed her, and then, as ducks are observed to do to frogs in spawning-time, at which time some frogs are observed to be venomous, so thoroughly washed her, by tumbling her up and down in the water, that he may devour her without danger. And Gesner affirms, that a Polonian gentleman did faithfully assure him, he had seen two young geese at one time in the belly of a Pike. And doubtless a Pike, in his height of hunger, will bite at and devour a dog that swims in a pond ; and there have been examples of it, or the like ; for as I told you, "The belly has no ears when hunger comes upon it."

The Pike is also observed to be a solitary, melancholy, and a bold fish ; melancholy, because he always swims or rests himself alone, and never swims in shoals or with company, as Roach and Dace, and most other fish do : and bold, because he fears not a shadow, or to see or be seen of anybody, as the Trout and Chub, and all other fish do.

And it is observed by Gesner, that the jaw-bones, and hearts, and galls of Pikes, are very medicinable for several diseases, or to stop blood, to abate fevers, to cure agues, to oppose or expel the infection of the plague, and to be many ways medicinable and useful for the good of mankind ; but he observes, that the biting of a Pike is venomous and hard to be cured.

And it is observed, that the Pike is a fish that breeds but once a year ; and that other fish, as namely Loaches, do breed oftener : as we are certain tame pigeons do almost every month, and yet the hawk, a bird of prey, as the Pike is a fish, breeds but once in twelve months ; and you are to note, that his time

of breeding, or spawning, is usually about the end of February, or somewhat later, in March, as the weather proves colder or warmer.

I might say more of this, but it might be thought curiosity or worse, and shall therefore forbear it, and take up so much of your attention as to tell you that the best of Pikes are noted to be in rivers, next, those in great ponds or meres, and the worst, in small ponds.

But before I proceed further, I am to tell you, that there is a great antipathy betwixt the Pike and some frogs; and this may appear to the reader of *Dubravius*, a bishop in Bohemia, who, in his book of fish and fish-ponds relates what he says he saw with his own eyes, and could not forbear to tell the reader. Which was:—

“As he and the bishop *Thurzo* were walking by a large pond in Bohemia, they saw a frog, when the Pike lay very sleepily and quiet by the shore-side, leap upon his head, and the frog having exprest malice or anger by his swoln cheeks and staring eyes, did stretch out his legs and embrace the Pike's head, and presently reached them to his eyes, tearing with them and his teeth those tender parts; the Pike, moved with anguish, moves up and down the water, and rubs himself against weeds, and whatever he thought might quit him of his enemy; but all in vain, for the frog did continue to ride triumphantly, and to bite and torment the Pike till his strength failed, and then the frog sunk with the Pike to the bottom of the water; then presently the frog appeared again at the top, and croaked, and seemed to rejoice like a conqueror, after which he presently retired to his secret hole. The bishop, that had beheld the battle, called his fisherman to fetch his nets, and by all means to get the Pike that they might declare what had happened; and the Pike was drawn forth, and both his eyes eaten out; at which when they began to wonder, the fisherman wished them to forbear, and assured them he was certain that Pikes were often so served.”

I told this, which is to be read in the sixth chapter of the book of *Dubravius*, unto a friend, who replied, "It was as improbable as to have the mouse scratch out the cat's eyes."

But he did not consider, that there be fishing frogs, which the Dalmatians call the water-devil, of which I might tell you as wonderful a story; but I shall tell you that 'tis not to be doubted, but that there be some frogs so fearful of the water-snake, that when they swim in a place in which they fear to meet with him, they then get a reed across into their mouths, which if they two meet by accident, secures the frog from the strength and malice of the snake; and note, that the frog usually swims the fastest of the two.

And let me tell you, that as there be water and land frogs, so there be land and water snakes. Concerning which take this observation, that the land-snake breeds and hatches her eggs, which become young snakes, in some old dunghill, or a like hot place; but the water-snake, which is not venomous, and as I have been assured by a great observer of such secrets, does not hatch, but breed her young alive, which she does not then forsake, but bides with them, and in case of danger will take them all into her mouth and swim away from any apprehended danger, and then let them out again when she thinks all danger to be past; these be accidents that we anglers sometimes see, and often talk of.

But whither am I going? I had almost lost myself, by remembering the discourse of *Dubravius*. I will therefore stop here, and tell you, according to my promise, how to catch this Pike.

CHARLES COTTON

[Charles Cotton, of Beresford in Staffordshire, was born in 1630. He was a friend of Izaak Walton, whom he called his father, and so ardent a fisherman that at his house on the Dove (a fine trout stream) he built a little fishing-box sacred to anglers, over the door of which the initials of Cotton and Walton were united in cipher. He died in 1687.]

EVENING QUATRAINS

THE day's grown old, the fainting Sun
Has but a little way to run ;
And yet his steeds, with all his skill,
Scarce lug the chariot down the hill. . . .

The shadows now so long do grow,
That brambles like tall cedars show ;
Molehills seem mountains, and the ant
Appears a monstrous elephant.

A very little, little flock
Shades thrice the ground that it would stock ;
Whilst the small stripling following them
Appears a mighty Polypheme. . . .

Now lowing herds are each-where heard ;
Chains rattle in the villains' yard ;
The cart's on tail set down to rest,
Bearing on high the cuckold's crest.

The hedge is stript, the clothes brought in,
Naught's left without should be within ;
The bees are hid, and hum their charm,
Whilst every house doth seem a swarm.

The cock now to the roost is prest,
For he must call up all the rest ;
The sow's fast pegg'd within the sty
To still her squeaking progeny.

Each one has had his supping mess,
The cheese is put into the press ;
The pans and bowls clean scalded all,
Rear'd up against the milk-house wall.

And now on benches all are sat
In the cool air to sing and chat,
Till Phœbus, dipping in the West,
Shall lead the world the way to rest.

DANIEL DEFOE

[Daniel Defoe (1659-1731), known to all as the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, though no great lover of inanimate nature, was capable of being greatly interested in animals, especially dogs and horses.]

DOG FRIENDSHIP

. . . MR. CAREW, author of the *Survey of Cornwall*, tells us a strange story of a dog in this town, of whom it was observed, that if they gave him any large bone, or piece of meat, he immediately went out of doors with it, and after having disappeared for some time, would return again ; upon which, after some time, they watched him, when, to their great surprise, they found that the poor charitable creature carried what he so got to an old decrepit mastiff, which lay in a den that he had made among the brakes a little way out of the town, and was blind, so that he could not help himself, and there this creature fed him : he adds also, that on Sundays or Holidays, when he found they made good cheer

in the house where he lived, he would go out, and bring this old blind dog to the door, and feed him there till he had enough, and then go with him back to his habitation in the country again, and see him safe in. If this story is true, it is very remarkable indeed, and I thought it worth telling, because the author was a person who might be credited.

JAMES THOMSON

[James Thomson, though perhaps best remembered as the author of "Rule, Britannia," is better entitled to a lasting place among poets by reason of his *Seasons*. Thomson was one of the few poets of the early eighteenth century to be genuinely interested in Nature. The following extracts are from *Winter*.]

JANUARY

SNATCHED in short eddies, plays the withered leaf ;
 And on the flood the dancing feather floats.
 With broadened nostrils to the sky upturned,
 The conscious heifer snuffs the stormy gale.
 E'en as the matron, at her nightly task,
 With pensive labour draws the flaxen thread,
 The wasted taper and the crackling flame
 Foretell the blast. But chief the plummy race,
 The tenants of the sky, its changes speak.
 Retiring from the downs, where all day long
 They picked their scanty fare, a blackening train
 Of clamorous rooks thick-urge their weary flight,
 And seek the closing shelter of the grove.
 Assiduous, in his bower, the wailing owl
 Plies his sad song. The cormorant on high
 Wheels from the deep, and screams along the land.
 Loud shrieks the soaring hern ; and with wild wing
 The circling sea-fowl cleave the flaky clouds.

THE ROBIN

THE fowls of Heaven,
Tamed by the cruel season, crowd around
The winnowing store, and claim the little boon
Which Providence assigns them.

One alone,
The redbreast, sacred to the household gods,
Wisely regardful of the embroiling sky,
In joyless fields and thorny thickets leaves
His shivering mates, and pays to trusted man
His annual visit. Half afraid, he first
Against the window beats ; then, brisk, alights
On the warm hearth ; then, hopping o'er the floor,
Eyes all the smiling family askance,
And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is.

GILBERT WHITE

[*The Natural History of Selborne* is one of the most charming books on natural history ever written, ranking with *The Compleat Angler* in its fullness of knowledge, its grace of style, and its abiding delight for readers. Selborne is a village in Hampshire, and here Gilbert White was born in 1720. Educated at Oxford, he returned to Selborne, a place he loved so dearly that he never quitted it to push his fortunes elsewhere. For forty years he watched with ceaseless interest and diligence the birds, trees, and flowers of the countryside. In 1767 he began writing a series of letters to two friends, and these letters were published in 1789. As in the case of Izaak Walton's famous work, the issue of a host of editions bears testimony to the merits of the book ; and though the progress of natural history has shown that White is occasionally mistaken in some statement or theory, his book remains a wonderful illustration of the knowledge

which may be gained by the patient observation of a Nature lover.

In the extracts that follow, one complete letter is given ; to each of the longer passages a heading has been added to call attention to the purport of the extract ; and finally a series of short but notable observations is given.]

THE PARISH OF SELBORNE

THE parish of Selborne lies in the extreme eastern corner of the county of Hampshire, bordering on the county of Sussex, and not far from the county of Surrey ; is about fifty miles south-west of London, in latitude fifty-one, and near midway between the towns of Alton and Petersfield. The soils of this district are almost as various and diversified as the views and aspects. The high part of the south-west consists of a vast hill of chalk, rising three hundred feet above the village, and is divided into a sheep-down, the high wood, and a long hanging wood, called the Hanger. The covert of this eminence is altogether beech, the most lovely of all forest trees, whether we consider its smooth rind or bark, its glossy foliage, or graceful pendulous boughs. The down, or sheep-walk, is a pleasing park-like spot, of about one mile by half that space, jutting out on the verge of the hill-country, where it begins to break down into the plains, and commanding a very engaging view, being an assemblage of hill, dale, woodlands, heath, and water. At the foot of this hill, one stage, or step, from the uplands, lies the village, which consists of one single straggling street, three quarters of a mile in length, in a sheltered vale, and running parallel with the Hanger. The houses are divided from the hill by a vein of stiff clay, (good wheat land,) yet stand on a rock of white stone, little in appearance removed from chalk, but seems so far from being calcareous, that it endures extreme heat.

The cartway of the village divides, in a remarkable manner, two very incongruous soils. To the south-west is a rank clay, that requires the labour of years to render it mellow ; while the gardens to the north-east, and small enclosures behind, consist of a warm, forward, crumbling mould called black malm, which seems highly saturated with vegetable and animal manure ; and these may perhaps have been the original site of the town, while the woods and coverts might extend down to the opposite bank.

Our wells, at an average, run to about sixty-three feet, and when sunk to that depth seldom fail, but produce a fine limpid water, soft to the taste, and much commended by those who drink the pure element, but which does not lather well with soap.

To the north-west, north, and east of the village, is a range of fair enclosures, consisting of what is called a white malm, a sort of rotten or rubble stone, which, when turned up to the frost and rain, moulders to pieces and becomes manure to itself.

Still on to the north-east, and a step lower, is a kind of white land, neither chalk nor clay, neither fit for pasture nor for the plough, yet kindly for hops, which root deep into the freestone, and have their poles and wood for charcoal growing just at hand. This white soil produces the brightest hops.

As the parish still inclines down towards Wolmer Forest, at the juncture of the clays and sands, the soil becomes a wet, sandy loam, remarkable for timber and infamous for roads. The oaks of Temple and Blackmoor stand high in the estimation of purveyors and have furnished much naval timber ; while the trees on the freestone grow large but are what workmen call *shaky*, and so brittle as often to fall in pieces in sawing. Beyond the sandy loam the soil becomes a hungry lean sand till it mingles with the forest, and will produce little without the assistance of lime and turnips.

SELBORNE,

February 22nd, 1770.

DEAR SIR,—

Hedgehogs abound in my gardens and fields. The manner in which they eat the roots of the plantain in my grass-walks is very curious : with their upper mandible, which is much longer than their lower, they bore under the plant, and so eat the root off upwards, leaving the tuft of leaves untouched. In this respect they are serviceable, as they destroy a very troublesome weed ; but they deface the walks in some measure, by digging little round holes. It appears, by the dung that they drop upon the turf, that beetles are no inconsiderable part of their food. In June last, I procured a litter of four or five young hedgehogs, which appeared to be about five or six days old : they, I find, like puppies, are born blind, and could not see when they came to my hands. No doubt their spines are soft and flexible at the time of their birth, but it is plain they soon harden ; for these little pigs had such stiff prickles on their backs and sides as would easily have fetched blood, had they not been handled with caution. Their spines are quite white at this age ; and they have little hanging ears which I do not remember to be discernible in the old ones. They can, in part, at this age draw their skin down over their faces ; but are not able to contract themselves into a ball, as they do for the sake of defence when full grown. The reason, I suppose, is because the curious muscle that enables the creature to roll itself up in a ball was not then arrived at its full tone and firmness. Hedgehogs make a deep and warm hybernaculum with leaves and moss, in which they conceal themselves for the winter ; but I could never find that they stored in any winter provision, as some quadrupeds certainly do.

I have discovered an anecdote with respect to the fieldfare which I think is particular enough. This bird, though it sits on trees in the daytime, and procures the

greatest part of its food from whitethorn hedges : yea, moreover, builds on very high trees : yet always appears with us to roost on the ground. And, besides, the larkers, in dragging their nets by night, frequently catch them in the wheat stubbles ; while the bat fowlers, who take many redwings in the hedges, never entangle any of this species. They are seen to come in flocks just before it is dark, and to settle and nestle among the heath on our forest. Why these birds in the matter of roosting, should differ from all their congeners, and from themselves also with respect to their proceedings by day, is a fact for which I am by no means able to account.

I have somewhat to inform you of concerning the moose-deer. But in general foreign animals fall seldom in my way ; my little intelligence is confined to the narrow sphere of my own observations at home.

THE FLIGHT OF BIRDS

A GOOD ornithologist should be able to distinguish birds by their air as well as by their colours and shape, on the ground as well as on the wing, and in the bush as well as in the hand. For though it must not be said that every species of birds has a manner peculiar to itself, yet there is somewhat in most genera, at least, that at first sight discriminates them, and enables a judicious observer to pronounce upon them with some certainty.

Thus kites and buzzards sail round in circles with wings expanded and motionless. The kestrel, or wind-hover, has a peculiar mode of hanging in the air in one place, his wings all the while being briskly agitated. Hen-harriers fly low over heaths or fields of corn, and beat the ground regularly like a pointer or setting-dog. Owls move in a buoyant manner, as if lighter than the air ; they seem to want ballast. There is a peculiarity

belonging to ravens that must draw the attention even of the most incurious—they spend all their leisure time in striking and cuffing each other on the wing in a kind of playful skirmish; and when they move from one place to another, frequently turn on their backs with a loud croak, and seem to be falling to the ground. When this odd gesture betides them, they are scratching themselves with one foot, and thus lose the centre of gravity. Rooks sometimes dive and tumble in a frolicsome manner; crows and daws swagger in their walk; woodpeckers open and close their wings at every stroke, and so are always rising or falling in curves. All of this genus use their tails, which incline downward, as a support while they run up trees. Parrots, like all other hooked-clawed birds, walk awkwardly, and make use of their bill as a third foot, climbing and descending with ridiculous caution. All the *gallinæ** parade and walk gracefully and run nimbly, but fly with difficulty, with an impetuous whirring, and in a straight line. Magpies and jays flutter with powerless wings, and make no dispatch. Herons seem encumbered with too much sail for their light bodies, but these vast hollow wings are necessary in carrying burdens such as large fish and the like. Pigeons, and especially the sort called smiters, have a way of clashing their wings, the one against the other, over their backs with a loud snap; another variety, called tumblers, turn themselves over in the air. Some birds have movements peculiar to the season of love. Thus ringdoves, though strong and rapid at other times, yet in the spring hang about on the wing in a toying and playful manner. Thus the cock-snipe, while breeding, forgetting his former flight, fans the air like the wind-hover; and the greenfinch, in particular, exhibits such languishing and faltering gestures as to appear like a wounded and dying bird. The kingfisher darts along like an arrow. Fern-owls,

* The poultry tribe, including pheasants and partridges.

or goat-suckers, glance in the dusk over the tops of the trees like a meteor. Starlings, as it were, swim along, while missel-thrushes use a wild and desultory flight. Swallows sweep over the surface of the ground and the water, and distinguish themselves by rapid turns and quick evolutions. Swifts dash round in circles, and the bank-martin moves with frequent vacillations like a butterfly. Most of the small birds fly by jerks, rising and falling as they advance. Most small birds hop; but wagtails and larks walk, moving their legs alternately. Skylarks rise and fall perpendicularly as they sing; woodlarks hang poised in the air; and titlarks rise and fall in large curves, singing in their descent. The whitethroat uses odd jerks and gesticulations over the tops of hedges and bushes. All the duck kind waddle; divers and auks walk as if fettered, and stand erect on their tails. Dabchicks, moorhens, and coots fly erect, with their legs hanging down, and hardly make any dispatch; the reason is plain: their wings are placed too far forward out of the true centre of gravity; as the legs of auks and divers are situated too far backward.

THE RAVEN TREE

ON the Blackmoor estate there is a small wood called Losel's, of a few acres, that was lately furnished with a set of oaks of a peculiar growth and great value: they were tall and taper like firs, but standing near together had very small heads, only a little brush without any large limbs. About twenty years ago the bridge at the Toy, near Hampton Court, being much decayed, some trees were wanted for the repairs that were fifty feet long without bough, and would measure twelve inches diameter at the little end. Twenty such trees did a purveyor find in this little wood, with this advantage, that many of them answered the description at sixty feet. These trees were sold for twenty pounds apiece.

In the centre of this grove there stood an oak, which, though shapely and tall on the whole, bulged out into a large excrescence about the middle of the stem. On this a pair of ravens had fixed their residence for such a series of years, that the oak was distinguished by the title of the Raven Tree. Many were the attempts of the neighbouring youths to get at this eyry. The difficulty whetted their inclinations, and each was ambitious of surmounting the arduous task. But when they arrived at the swelling, it jutted out so in their way, and was so far beyond their grasp, that the most daring lads were awed, and acknowledged the undertaking to be too hazardous. So the ravens built on, nest after nest, in perfect security till the fatal day arrived in which the wood was to be levelled. It was in the month of February, when these birds usually sit. The saw was applied to the butt, the wedges were inserted into the opening, the woods echoed to the heavy blow of the beetle or mallet, the tree nodded to its fall: but still the dam sat on. At last, when it gave way, the bird was flung from her nest; and though her parental affection deserved a better fate, was whipped down by the twigs, which brought her dead to the ground.

EARTHWORMS

LANDS that are subject to frequent inundations are always poor; and probably the reason may be that the worms are drowned. The most insignificant insects and reptiles are of much more consequence, and have much more influence in the economy of nature, than the incurious are aware of; and are mighty in their effect from their minuteness, which renders them less an object of attention, and from their numbers and fecundity. Earthworms, though in appearance a small and despicable link in the chain of nature, yet, if lost, would make a lamentable chasm. For to say nothing

of half the birds, and some quadrupeds, which are almost entirely supported by them, worms seem to be the great promoters of vegetation, which would proceed but lamely without them, by boring, perforating, and loosening the soil, and rendering it pervious to rains and the fibres of plants, by drawing straws and stalks of leaves into it; and most of all, by throwing up such infinite numbers of lumps of earth called worm-casts, which is a fine manure for grain and grass. Worms probably provide new soil for hills and slopes where the rain washes the earth away, and they affect * slopes, probably, to avoid being flooded. Gardeners and farmers express their detestation of worms; the former, because they render their walks unsightly and make them much work; and the latter, because, as they think, worms eat their green corn. But these men would find that the earth without worms would soon become cold, hard-bound, and void of fermentation, and consequently sterile; and besides, in favour of worms, it should be hinted that green corn, plants, and flowers are not so much injured by them as by many species of *coleoptera* in their larva or grub state, and by unnoticed myriads of small shell-less snails, called slugs, which silently and imperceptibly make amazing havoc in the field and garden.

These hints we think proper to throw out in order to set the inquisitive and discerning to work. A good monography of worms would afford much entertainment, and information at the same time; and would open a large and new field in natural history. Worms work most in the spring, but by no means lie torpid in the dead months; and are out every mild night in the winter, as any person may be convinced that will take the pains to examine his grass-plots with a candle.

[This extract is especially noteworthy as showing Gilbert White's interest (very rare for his times) in such

* *i.e.*, they frequent slopes.

humble creatures as earthworms. More than a century later Charles Darwin wrote such a book on earthworms as White had hoped to see, and confirmed the Selborne naturalist's views as to the great service rendered by these little creatures.]

OWLS

WE have had, ever since I can remember, a pair of white owls that constantly breed under the eaves of this church. As I have paid good attention to the manner of life of these birds during their season of breeding, which lasts the summer through, the following remarks may not perhaps be unacceptable. About an hour before sunset, (for then the mice begin to run,) they sally forth in quest of prey, and hunt all round the hedges of meadows and small enclosures for them, which seem to be their only food. In this irregular country we can stand on an eminence and see them beat the fields over like a setting-dog, and often drop down in the grass or corn. I have minuted these birds with my watch for an hour together, and have found that they return to their nest, the one or the other of them, about once in five minutes; reflecting, at the same time, on the adroitness that every animal is possessed of, as far as regards the well-being of itself and offspring. But a piece of address, which they show when they return loaded, should not, I think, be passed over in silence. As they take their prey with their claws, so they carry it in their claws to their nest; but as their feet are necessary in their ascent under the tiles, they constantly perch first on the roof of the chancel, and shift the mouse from their claws to their bill, that their feet may be at liberty to take hold of the plate on the wall, as they are rising under the eaves.

White owls seem not (but in this I am not positive) to hoot at all; all that clamorous hooting appears to me to come from the wood kinds. The white owl does

indeed snore and hiss in a tremendous manner ; and these menaces well answer the intention of intimidating, for I have known a whole village up in arms on such an occasion, imagining the churchyard to be full of goblins and spectres. White owls also often scream horribly as they fly along ; from this screaming probably arose the common people's imaginary species of screech-owl, which they superstitiously think attends the windows of dying persons. The plumage of the remiges of the wings of every species of owl that I have yet examined is remarkably soft and pliant. Perhaps it may be necessary that the wings of these birds should not make much resistance or rushing, that they may be enabled to steal through the air unheard upon a nimble and watchful quarry.

While I am talking of owls, it may not be improper to mention what I was told by a gentleman of the county of Wilts. As they were grubbing a vast hollow pollard ash that had been the mansion of owls for centuries, he discovered at the bottom a mass of matter that at first he could not account for. After some examination he found that it was a congeries of the bones of mice (and perhaps of birds and bats) that had been heaping together for ages, being cast up in pellets out of the crops of many generations of inhabitants. For owls cast up the bones, fur, and feathers of what they devour, after the manner of hawks. He believes, he told me, that there were bushels of this kind of substance.

When brown owls hoot, their throat swells as big as a hen's egg. I have known an owl of this species live a full year without water. Perhaps the case may be the same with all birds of prey. When owls fly they stretch out their legs behind them as a balance to their large, heavy heads ; for as most nocturnal birds have large eyes and ears they must have large heads to contain them. Large eyes, I presume, are necessary to collect every ray of light, and large concave ears to command the smallest degree of sound or noise.

THE FIELD-CRICKET

THERE is a steep abrupt pasture field, interspersed with furze, close to the back of this village, well known by the name of Short Lithe, consisting of a rocky dry soil, and inclining to the afternoon sun. This spot abounds with the *Gryllus campestris*, or field-cricket; which, though frequent in these parts, is by no means a common insect in many other counties.

As their cheerful summer cry cannot but draw the attention of a naturalist, I have often gone down to examine the economy of these *grylli*, and study their mode of life. But they are so shy and cautious that it is no easy matter to get a sight of them; for feeling a person's footstep as he advances, they stop short in the midst of their song, and retire backward nimbly into their burrows, where they lurk till all suspicion of danger is over.

At first we attempted to dig them out with a spade, but without any great success; for either we could not get to the bottom of the hole, which often terminated under a great stone; or else in breaking up the ground we inadvertently squeezed the poor insect to death. Out of one so bruised we took a multitude of eggs, which were long and narrow, of a yellow colour, and covered with a very tough skin. By this accident we learned to distinguish the male from the female; the former of which is shining black, with a golden stripe across his shoulders; the latter is more dusky, more capacious about the abdomen, and carries a long sword-shaped weapon at her tail, which probably is the instrument with which she deposits her eggs in crannies and safe receptacles.

Where violent methods will not avail, more gentle means will often succeed; and so it proved in the present case; for though a spade be too boisterous and rough an implement, a pliant stalk of grass, gently in-

sinuated into the caverns, will probe their windings to the bottom, and quickly bring out the inhabitant ; and thus the humane inquirer may gratify his curiosity without injuring the object of it. It is remarkable that though these insects are furnished with long legs behind, and brawny thighs for leaping, like grasshoppers, yet when driven from their holes they show no activity, but crawl along in a shiftless manner, so as easily to be taken ; and again, though provided with a curious apparatus of wings, yet they never exert them when there seems to be the greatest occasion. The males only make that shrilling noise, perhaps out of rivalry and emulation, as is the case with many animals which exert some sprightly note during their breeding time ; it is raised by a brisk friction of one wing against the other. They are solitary beings, living singly male or female, each as it may happen. When the males meet they will fight fiercely, as I found by some which I put into the crevices of a dry stone wall, where I should have been glad to have made them settle. For though they seemed distressed by being taken out of their knowledge, yet the first that got possession of the chinks would seize on any other that were intruded on them with a vast row of serrated fangs. With their strong jaws, toothed like the shears of a lobster's claws, they perforate and round their curious regular cells, having no fore-claws to dig like the mole-cricket. When taken in hand I could not but wonder that they never offered to defend themselves, though armed with such formidable weapons. Of such herbs as grow before the mouths of the burrows they eat indiscriminately, and never in the daytime seem to stir more than two or three inches from home. Sitting in the entrance of their caverns, they chirp all night as well as day from the middle of the month of May to the middle of July ; and in hot weather, when they are most vigorous, they make the hills echo ; and in the stiller hours of darkness they

may be heard to a considerable distance. In the beginning of the season their notes are more faint and inward; but become louder as the summer advances, and so die away again by degrees.

Sounds do not always give us pleasure according to their sweetness and melody, nor do harsh sounds always displease. We are more apt to be captivated or disgusted with the associations which they promote, than with the notes themselves. Thus the shrilling of the field-cricket, though sharp and stridulous, yet marvellously delights some hearers, filling their minds with a train of summer ideas of everything that is rural, verdurous, and joyous.

About the 10th of March the crickets appear at the mouths of their cells, which they then open and bore, and shape very elegantly. All that I have ever seen at that season were in their pupa stage, and had only the rudiments of wings, lying under a skin or coat which must be cast before the insect can arrive at its perfect state; from whence I should suppose that the old ones of last year do not always survive the winter. In August their holes begin to be obliterated, and the insects are seen no more till spring.

Not many summers ago I endeavoured to transplant a colony to the terrace in my garden, by boring deep holes in the sloping turf. The new inhabitants stayed some time, and fed and sung; but wandered away by degrees, and were heard at a farther distance every morning; so that it appears that on this emergency they made use of their wings in attempting to return to the spot from which they were taken.

SHORT PASSAGES ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS

It has been my misfortune never to have had any neighbours whose studies have led them towards the pursuit of natural knowledge; so that for want of a

companion to quicken my industry and sharpen my attention, I have made but slender progress in a kind of information to which I have been attached from my childhood.

My friend had a little helpless leveret brought to him, which the servants fed with milk in a spoon, and about the same time his cat kittened and the young were dispatched and buried. The hare was soon lost, and supposed to be gone the way of most foundlings, to be killed by some dog or cat. However, in about a fortnight, as the master was sitting in his garden in the dusk of the evening, he observed his cat, with tail erect, trotting towards him and calling with little short inward notes of complacency, such as they use towards their kittens, and something gambolling after, which proved to be the leveret that the cat had supported with her milk, and continued to support with great affection.

There are three creatures—the squirrel, the field-mouse, and the bird called the nut-hatch—which live much on hazel-nut; and yet they open them each in a different way. The first, after rasping off the small end, splits the shell in two with his long fore-teeth, as a man does with his knife; the second nibbles a hole with his teeth, so regular as if drilled with a wimble, and yet so small that one could wonder how the kernel can be extracted through it; while the last picks an irregular ragged hole with its bill; but as this artist has no paws to hold the nut firm while he pierces it, like an adroit workman he fixes it as it were in a vice in some cleft of a tree or in some crevice, when, standing over it, he perforates the stubborn shell.

A gentleman in this neighbourhood had two milk-white rooks in one nest. A booby of a carter, finding them before they were able to fly, threw them down

and destroyed them, to the regret of the owner, who would have been glad to have preserved such a curiosity in his rookery. I saw the birds myself, nailed against the end of a barn, and was surprised to find that their bills, legs, feet, and claws were milk-white.

I was much entertained last summer with a tame bat, which would take flies out of a person's hand. If you gave it anything to eat, it brought its wings round before the mouth, hovering and hiding its head in the manner of birds of prey when they feed. The adroitness it showed in shearing off the wings of the flies, which were always rejected, was worthy of observation and pleased me much. Insects seemed to be most acceptable, though it did not refuse raw flesh when offered; so that the notion that bats go down chimneys and gnaw men's bacon, seems no improbable story. While I amused myself with this wonderful quadruped, I saw it several times confute the vulgar opinion that bats when down upon a flat surface cannot get on the wing again, by rising with great ease from the floor. It ran, I observed, with more despatch than I was aware of, but in a most ridiculous and grotesque manner.

As a neighbour was lately ploughing a dry, chalky field, far removed from any water, he turned out a water-rat, that was curiously laid up in an hybernaculum artificially formed of grass and leaves. At one end of the burrow lay above a gallon of potatoes, regularly stowed, on which it was to have supported itself for the winter. But the difficulty with me is how it came to fix its winter station at such a distance from the water. Was it determined in its choice of that place by the mere accident of finding the potatoes which were planted there? Or is it the constant practice of the aquatic rat to forsake the neighbourhood of the water in the colder months?

January 7th, 1776.—Snow driving all the day, which was followed by frost, sleet, and some snow, till the 12th, when a prodigious mass overwhelmed all the works of men, drifting over the tops of the gates, and filling the hollow lanes.

On the 14th the writer was obliged to be much abroad, and thinks he never before or since encountered such rugged Siberian weather. Many of the narrow roads were now filled above the tops of the hedges, through which the snow was driven into most romantic and grotesque shapes, so striking to the imagination as not to be seen without wonder and pleasure. The hares lay sullenly in their seats, and would not move till compelled by hunger; being conscious, poor animals, that the drifts and heaps treacherously betray their footsteps, and prove fatal to numbers of them.

WILLIAM COWPER

[Cowper, burdened throughout life with a tendency to melancholy and despair, often found solace in contemplation of, and meditation upon, the diversified beauties of the countryside.]

YARDLEY OAK

(This oak was said to have been planted by Judith, daughter of William the Conqueror.)

RELIC of ages ! could a mind, imbued
With truth from heaven, created thing adore,
I might with reverence kneel and worship thee. . . .

Thou wast a bauble once ; a cup and ball,
Which babes might play with ; and the thievish jay,
Seeking her food, with ease might have purloined

The auburn nut that held thee, swallowing down
The yet close-folded latitude of boughs
And all thy embryo vastness at a gulp.
But fate thy growth decreed ; autumnal rains,
Beneath thy parent tree, mellowed the soil
Designed thy cradle ; and a skipping deer,
With pointed hoof dibbling the glebe, prepared
The soft receptacle in which, secure,
Thy rudiments should sleep the winter through. . . .

Who lived when thou wast such ? Oh, couldst thou
speak,
As in Dodona once thy kindred trees
Oracular, I would not curious ask
The future, best unknown, but at thy mouth
Inquisitive, the less ambiguous past.
By thee I might correct, erroneous oft,
The clock of history, facts and events
Timing more punctual, unrecorded facts
Recovering, and misstated setting right—
Desperate attempt till trees shall speak again ! . . .

Thought cannot spend itself, comparing still
The great and little of thy lot, thy growth
From almost nullity into a state
Of matchless grandeur, and declension thence,
Slow, into such magnificent decay.
Time was when, settling on thy leaf, a fly
Could shake thee to the root—and time has been
When tempest could not. At thy firmest age
Thou hadst within thy bole solid contents,
That might have ribbed the sides and planked the deck
Of some flagged admiral ; and tortuous arms,
The shipwrights' darling treasure, didst present
To the four-quartered winds, robust and bold,
Warped into tough knee-timber, many a load !
But the axe spared thee. In those thriftier days
Oaks fell not, hewn by thousands, to supply

The bottomless demands of contest waged
For senatorial honours. Thus to time
The task was left to whittle thee away
With his sly scythe, whose ever-nibbling edge,
Noiseless, an atom, and an atom more,
Disjoining from the rest, has, unobserved,
Achieved a labour, which had, far and wide,
By man performed, made all the forest ring.

WILLIAM GILPIN

[William Gilpin (1724-1804) was vicar of Boldre, in the New Forest. He wrote about Nature and natural scenery with the eye of a landscape painter, and it is this characteristic that gives its chief interest to the following extract from his *Forest Scenery* (1791).]

SUNRISE AND SUNSET IN THE FOREST

THE first dawn of day exhibits a beautiful obscurity. When the east begins just to brighten with the reflections only of effulgence, a pleasing progressive light, dubious and amusing, is thrown over the face of things. A single ray is able to assist the picturesque eye, which by such slender aid creates a thousand imaginary forms, if the scene be unknown, and as the light steals gradually on, is amused by correcting its vague ideas by the real objects. What in the confusion of twilight perhaps seemed a stretch of rising ground, broken into various parts, becomes now vast masses of wood and an extent of forest.

As the sun begins to appear above the horizon, another change takes place. What was before only form, being now enlightened, begins to receive effect. This effect depends on two circumstances—the catching lights which touch the summits of every object, and

the mistiness in which the rising orb is commonly enveloped.

The effect is often pleasing when the sun rises in unsullied brightness, diffusing its ruddy light over the upper parts of objects, which is contrasted by the deeper shadows below; yet the effect is then only transcendent when he rises accompanied by a train of vapours in a misty atmosphere. Among lakes and mountains this happy accompaniment often forms the most astonishing visions, and yet in the forest it is nearly as great. With what delightful effect do we sometimes see the sun's disk just appear above a woody hill, or, in Shakespeare's language,

Stand tiptoe on the misty mountain's top,

and dart his diverging rays through the rising vapour. The radiance, catching the tops of the trees as they hang midway upon the shaggy steep, and touching here and there a few other prominent objects, imperceptibly mixes its ruddy tint with the surrounding mists, setting on fire, as it were, their upper parts, while their lower skirts are lost in a dark mass of varied confusion, in which trees and ground and radiance and obscurity are all blended together. When the eye is fortunate enough to catch the glowing instant—for it is always a vanishing scene—it furnishes an idea worth treasuring among the choicest appearances of nature. . . .

Landscape painters, in general, pay too little attention to the discriminations of morning and evening. We are often at a loss to distinguish in pictures the rising from the setting sun, though their characters are very different both in the lights and shadows. The ruddy lights, indeed, of the evening are more easily distinguished, but it is not perhaps always sufficiently observed that the shadows of the evening are much less opaque than those of the morning. They may be

brightened, perhaps, by the numberless rays floating in the atmosphere, which are incessantly reverberated in every direction, and may continue in action after the sun is set ; whereas in the morning the rays of the preceding day having subsided, no object receives any light but from the immediate lustre of the sun. Whatever becomes of the theory, the fact I believe is well ascertained.

GEORGE CRABBE

[George Crabbe, born at Aldeburgh, in Suffolk, and author of *Tales in Verse* and *Tales of the Hall*, has been described by Byron as "Nature's sternest painter, yet the best."]

AUTUMN IN EAST ANGLIA

(From *Tales of the Hall*.)

It was a fair and mild autumnal sky,
And earth's ripe treasures met the admiring eye,
As a rich beauty when the bloom is lost
Appears with more magnificence and cost ;
The wet and heavy grass, where feet had strayed,
Not yet erect, the wanderer's way betrayed ;
Showers of the night had swelled the deepening rill,
The morning breeze had urged the quickening mill ;
Assembled rooks had winged their seaward flight,
By the same passage to return at night,
When proudly o'er them hung the steady kite,
Then turned them back, and left the noisy throng,
Nor deigned to know them as he sailed along.

Long yellow leaves, from osiers, strewed around,
Choked the dull stream, and hushed its feeble sound,
While the dead foliage, dropt from loftier trees,

Our squire beheld not with his wonted ease ;
 But to his own reflections made reply,
 And said aloud, " Yes ; doubtless we must die."
 " We must," said Richard ; " and we would not live
 To feel what dotage and decay will give ;
 But we yet taste whatever we behold ;
 The morn is lovely, though the air is cold :
 There is delicious quiet in this scene,
 At once so rich, so varied, so serene ;
 Sounds, too, delight us—each discordant tone
 Thus mingled please, that fail to please alone ;
 This hollow wind, this rustling of the brook,
 The farm-yard noise, the woodman at yon oak—
 See, the axe falls !—now listen to the stroke :
 That gun itself, that murders all this peace,
 Adds to the charm, because it soon must cease."

AN ENGLISH FEN

(From *Tales* : " *Lover's Journey*.")

ON either side
 Is level fen, a prospect wild and wide,
 With dikes on either hand by ocean's self supplied :
 Far on the right the distant sea is seen,
 And salt the springs that feed the marsh between :
 Beneath an ancient bridge the straitened flood
 Rolls through its sloping banks of slimy mud ;
 Near it a sunken boat resists the tide,
 That frets and hurries to the opposing side ;
 The rushes sharp that on the borders grow
 Bend their brown flowerets to the stream below,
 Impure in all its course, in all its progress slow :
 Here a grave Flora scarcely deigns to bloom,
 Nor wears a rosy blush, nor sheds perfume ;
 The few dull flowers that o'er the place are spread
 Partake the nature of their fenny bed.

Here on its wiry stem, in rigid bloom,
Grows the salt lavender that lacks perfume ;
Here the dwarf sallows creep, the septonil harsh,
And the soft slimy mallow of the marsh ;
Low on the ear the distant billows sound,
And just in view appears their stony bound ;
Nor hedge nor tree conceals the glowing sun ;
Birds, save a watery tribe, the district shun,
Nor chirp among the reeds where bitter waters run.

ROBERT BURNS

[Robert Burns, Scotland's greatest poet, was the son of an Ayrshire peasant-farmer. The poem quoted below well illustrates the lovable spirit of him

“ . . . who walked in glory and in joy,
Following his plough upon the mountain side.”]

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY

On turning one down with the plough in April 1786

WEE, modest, crimson-tippèd flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour ;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem :
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonnie gem.

Alas ! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonnie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weat,
Wi' speckled breast,
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east. .

THE PLEASANT LAND

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
 Upon thy early, humble birth ;
 Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
 Amid the storm,
 Scarce rear'd above the parent earth
 Thy tender form.

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield,
 High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield ;
 But thou, beneath the random bield
 O' clod or stane,
 Adorns the histie stibble-field,
 Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
 Thy snawie bosom sunward spread,
 Thou lifts thy unassuming head
 In humble guise ;
 But now the *share* uptears thy bed,
 And low thou lies !

JOANNA BAILLIE

[Joanna Baillie, friend of Sir Walter Scott, and a very popular authoress in her own day, is now remembered chiefly by a few poems, of which the following is one of the best known, and by her songs, which have the great merit of being hearty and breezy.]

THE COTTAGE KITTEN

WANTON drole, whose harmless play
 Beguiles the rustic's closing day,
 When, drawn the evening fire about,
 Sit aged crone and thoughtless lout,

And child upon his three-foot stool,
Waiting till his supper cool ;
And maid, whose cheek outblossoms the rose,
As bright the blazing faggot glows,
Who, bending to the friendly light,
Plies her task with busy sleight ;
Come, show thy tricks and sportive graces,
Thus circled round with merry faces.

Backward coil'd, and crouching low,
With glaring eyeballs watch thy foe,
The housewife's spindle whirling round,
Or thread, or straw, that on the ground
Its shadows throws, by urchins sly
Held out to lure thy roving eye ;
Then, onward stealing, fiercely spring
Upon the futile, faithless thing.
Now, wheeling round, with bootless skill,
Thy bo-peep tail provokes thee still,
As oft beyond thy curving side
Its jetty tip is seen to glide ;
Till, from thy centre starting far,
Thou sidelong rear'st, with rump in air,
Erected stiff, and gait awry,
Like madam in her tantrums high :
Tho' ne'er a madam of them all
Whose silken kirtle sweeps the hall,
More varied trick and whim displays,
To catch the admiring stranger's gaze.

Doth power in varied measures dwell,
All thy vagaries wild to tell ?
Ah no ! the start, the jet, the bound,
The giddy scamper round and round,
With leap, and jerk, and high curvet,
And many a whirling somerset.
These mock the deffest rhymers skill,
But poor in art, tho' rich in will.

The featest tumbler, stage-bedight
 To thee is but a clumsy wight,
 Who every limb and sinew strains,
 To do what costs thee little pains,
 For which, I trow, the gaping crowd
 Requites him oft with plaudits loud.
 But, stopp'd the while thy wanton play,
 Applauses too *thy* feats repay :
 For then, beneath some urchin's hand,
 With modest pride thou tak'st thy stand,
 While many a stroke of fondness glides
 Along thy back and tabby sides.
 Dilated swells thy glossy fur,
 And loudly sings thy busy purr ;
 As, timing well the equal sound,
 Thy clutching feet bepat the ground.
 And all their harmless claws disclose,
 Like prickles of an early rose ;
 While softly from thy whisker'd cheek
 Thy half-clos'd eyes peer mild and meek.

ROBERT BLOOMFIELD

[Robert Bloomfield, born near Bury St. Edmunds in 1766, began work on a farm at the age of eleven. Afterwards a shoemaker, he drew upon his recollections of his early life in the country when he published, in 1800, *The Farmer's Boy*, divided into four parts—one for each season. Though perhaps not a great poet, the passages quoted below show that Bloomfield could at times paint with vigour and fidelity the scenes he knew and loved as a child.]

HARVEST

Its dark-green hue, its sicklier tints all fail,
 And ripening harvest rustles in the gale.
 A glorious sight, if glory dwells below,
 Where Heaven's munificence makes all the show

O'er every field and golden prospect found,
That glads the ploughman's Sunday morning's round,
When on some eminence he takes his stand,
To judge the smiling produce of the land.
Here Vanity slinks back, her head to hide :
What is there here to flatter human pride ?
The tow'ring fabric, or the dome's loud roar,
And steadfast columns, may astonish more,
Where the charm'd gazer long delighted stays,
Yet traced but to the architect the praise ;
Whilst here, the veriest clown that treads the sod,
Without one scruple gives the praise to God ;
And twofold joys possess his raptured mind,
From gratitude and admiration joined.

.

Hark ! where the sweeping scythe now rips along :
Each sturdy mower, emulous and strong,
Whose writhing form meridian heat defies,
Bends o'er his work, and every sinew tries ;
Prostrates the waving treasure at his feet,
But spares the rising clover, short and sweet.
Come, Health ! come, Jollity ! light-footed, come ;
Here hold your revels, and make this your home.
Each heart awaits and hails you as its own ;
Each moisten'd brow, that scorns to wear a frown :
Th' unpeopled dwelling mourns its tenants stray'd ;
E'en the domestic laughing dairy-maid
Hies to the field, the general toil to share.
Meanwhile the farmer quits his elbow-chair,
His cool brick floor, his pitcher, and his ease,
And braves the sultry beams, and gladly sees
His gates thrown open, and his team abroad,
The ready group attendant on his word,
To turn the swarth, the quiv'ring load to rear,
Or ply the busy rake, the land to clear.
Summer's light garb itself now cumb'rous grown,
Each his thin doublet in the shade throws down ;

Where oft the mastiff skulks with half-shut eye,
 And rouses at the stranger passing by ;
 Whilst unrestrained the social converse flows,
 And every breast Love's powerful impulse knows,
 And rival wits with more than rustic grace
 Confess the presence of a pretty face.

THE GANDER

He comes, the pest and terror of the yard,
 His full-blooded progeny's imperious guard ;
 The gander ;—spiteful, insolent, and bold,
 At the colt's footlock takes his daring hold :
 There, serpent-like, escapes a dreadful blow ;
 And straight attacks a poor defenceless cow :
 Each body goose th' unworthy strife enjoys,
 And hulk-hil' grows with redoubled noise.
 Then back he stalks, of self-importance full,
 Seizes the cherry from top of the bull,
 Till startled aloft he falls : a timely check,
 To curb to curb his worthless neck :
 To let of old be beasts an honour'd wound ;
 Be it that broken wing that trails the ground !

O for a Hovel, e'er so small or low,
Whose roof, repelling winds and early snow,
Might bring home's comforts fresh before his eyes !
No sooner thought, than see the structure rise,
In some sequester'd nook, embank'd around,
Sods for its walls, and straw in burdens bound.
Dried fuel hoarded is his richest store,
And circling smoke obscures his little door :
Whence creeping forth, to duty's call he yields,
And strolls the Crusoe of the lonely fields.

ACORNING THE PIGS

No more the fields with scatter'd grain supply
The restless wandering tenants of the sty ;
From oak to oak they run with eager haste,
And wrangling share the first delicious taste
Of fallen acorns ; yet but thinly found
Till the strong gale has shook them to the ground.
It comes ; and roaring woods obedient wave :
Their home well pleased the joint adventurers leave :
The trudging sow leads forth her numerous young,
Playful, and white, and clean, the briars among,
Till briars and thorns increasing, fence them round,
Where last year's mould'ring leaves bestrew the
ground.
And o'er their heads, loud lash'd by furious squalls,
Bright from their cups the rattling treasure falls ;
Hot, thirsty food ; whence doubly sweet and cool
The welcome margin of some rush-grown pool,
The wild duck's lonely haunt, whose jealous eye
Guards every point ; who sits, prepared to fly,
On the calm bosom of her little lake,
Too closely screen'd for ruffian winds to shake ;
And as the bold intruders press around,
At once she starts, and rises with a bound :

With bristles raised the sudden noise they hear,
 And ludicrously wild, and wing'd with fear,
 The herd decamp with more than swinish speed,
 And snorting dash through sedge, and rush, and
 reed :

Through tangling thickets headlong on they go,
 Then stop and listen for their fancied foe ;
 The hindmost still the growing panic spreads,
 Repeated fright the first alarm succeeds,
 Till Folly's wages, wounds and thorns, they reap :
 Yet glorying in their fortunate escape,
 Their groundless terrors by degrees soon cease,
 And Night's dark reign restores their wonted peace.
 For now the gale subsides, and from each bough
 The roosting pheasant's short but frequent crow
 Invites to rest ; and huddling side by side,
 The herd in closest ambush seek to hide ;
 Seek some warm slope with shagged moss o'erspread,
 Dried leaves their copious covering and their bed.
 In vain may Giles, through gath'ring glooms that fall,
 And solemn silence, urge his piercing call :
 Whole days and nights they tarry midst their store,
 Nor quit the woods till oaks can yield no more.

THE FAKENHAM GHOST

THE lawns were dry in Euston Park ;
 (Here Truth inspires my tale)
 The lonely footpath, still and dark,
 Led over hill and dale.

Benighted was an ancient dame,
 And fearful haste she made
 To gain the vale of Fakenham,
 And hail its willow shade.

Her footsteps knew no idle stops,
But follow'd faster still ;
And echo'd to the darksome copse
That whisper'd on the hill ;

Where clam'rous rooks, yet scarcely hush'd,
Bespoke a peopled shade ;
A many a wing the foliage brush'd,
And hov'ring circuits made.

The dappled herd of grazing deer
That sought the shades by day,
Now started from her path with fear,
And gave the stranger way.

Darker it grew, and darker fears
Came o'er her troubled mind ;
When now, a short, quick step she hears
Come patting close behind.

She turn'd ; it stopt !—nought could she see
Upon the gloomy plain !
But as she strove the sprite to flee,
She heard the same again.

Now terror seized her quaking frame ;
For, where the path was bare,
The trotting ghost kept on the same !
She mutter'd many a prayer.

Yet once again, amidst her fright,
She tried what sight could do ;
When through the cheating glooms of night
A monster stood in view.

Regardless of whate'er she felt,
It follow'd down the plain !
She own'd her sins, and down she knelt,
And said her prayers again.

Then on she sped : and hope grew strong,
The white park-gate in view ;
Which pushing hard, so long it swung
That ghost and all pass'd through.

Loud fell the gate against the post !
Her heart-strings like to crack ;
For much she fear'd the grisly ghost
Would leap upon her back.

Still on, pat, pat, the goblin went,
As it had done before :
Her strength and resolution spent,
She fainted at the door.

Out came her husband, much surprised :
Out came her daughter dear :
Good-natured souls ! all unadvised
Of what they had to fear.

The candle's gleam pierced through the night,
Some short space o'er the green ;
And there the little trotting sprite
Distinctly might be seen.

An ass's foal had lost its dam
Within the spacious park ;
And simple as the playful lamb,
Had follow'd in the dark.

No goblin he ; no imp of sin :
No crimes had ever known.
They took the shaggy stranger in,
And rear'd him as their own.

His little hoofs would rattle round
Upon the cottage floor :
The matron learn'd to love the sound
That frighten'd her before.

A favourite the ghost became ;
And 'twas his fate to thrive :
And long he lived and spread his fame,
And kept the joke alive.

For many a laugh went through the vale ;
And some conviction too ;—
Each thought some other goblin tale,
Perhaps, was just as true.

JAMES HOGG

[James Hogg, the son of an Ettrick shepherd, began work on a farm at a very early age ; but, resolved to follow in the footsteps of Burns, he became, not indeed the equal of the Scottish master-poet, but at any rate one whom Scotland justly remembers with pride.]

THE SKYLARK

BIRD of the wilderness,
Blithesome and cumberless,
Sweet be thy matin o'er moorland and lea !
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place—
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee !

THE PLEASANT LAND

Wild is thy lay and loud,
 Far in the downy cloud,
 Love gives it energy, love gave it birth.
 Where on thy dewy wing,
 Where art thou journeying ?
 Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth.

O'er fell and fountain sheen,
 O'er moor and mountain green,
 O'er the red streamer that heralds the day,
 Over the cloudlet dim,
 Over the rainbow's rim,
 Musical cherub, soar, singing away !

Then, when the gloaming comes,
 Low in the heather blooms
 Sweet will thy welcome and bed of love be !
 Emblem of happiness,
 Blest is thy dwelling-place—
 Oh, to abide in the desert with thee !

WILLIAM COBBETT

[William Cobbett, a veritable "son of the soil," was born at Farnham in 1763, and brought up as a ploughman. He became a soldier, then a farmer, and was finally a Member of Parliament. A strong sympathizer with the labourers, and a vigorous speaker and pamphleteer, Cobbett was twice prosecuted for sedition, but emerged triumphantly from the ordeal of his second trial. In *Rural Rides* he gives a unique picture of rural life between 1820 and 1830.]

WOODLAND COUNTRIES

WOODLAND countries are interesting on many accounts. Not so much on account of their masses of green leaves, as on account of the variety of sights and sounds and

incidents that they afford. Even in winter the coppices are beautiful to the eye, while they comfort the mind with the idea of shelter and warmth. In spring they change their hue from day to day during two whole months, which is about the time from the first appearance of the delicate leaves of the birch to the full expansion of those of the ash ; and, even before the leaves come at all to intercept the view, what in vegetable creation is so delightful to behold as the bed of a coppice bespangled with primroses and bluebells ? The opening of the birch leaves is the signal for the pheasant to begin to crow, for the blackbird to whistle, and the thrush to sing, and, just when the oak-buds begin to look reddish, and not a day before, the whole tribe of finches burst forth in songs from every bough, while the lark, imitating them all, carries the joyous sounds to the sky. These are amongst the means which Providence has benignantly appointed to sweeten the toils by which food and raiment are produced.

“ FAR KENTISH HOPFIELDS ”

ARTHUR YOUNG calls the vale between Farnham and Alton *the finest ten miles* in England. Here is a river with fine meadows on each side of it, and with rising grounds on each outside of the meadows, those grounds having some hop gardens and some pretty woods. But, though I was born in this vale, I must confess, that the ten miles between Maidstone and Tunbridge (which the Kentish folks call the *Garden of Eden*) is a great deal finer ; for here, with a river three times as big, and a vale three times as broad, there are, on rising grounds six times as broad, not only hop gardens and beautiful woods, but immense orchards of apples, pears, plums, cherries, and filberts, and these, in many cases, with gooseberries and currants and raspberries beneath ; and, all taken together, the vale is really worthy of the

appellation which it bears. But, even this spot, which I believe to be the very finest, as to fertility and diminutive beauty, in this whole world, I, for my part, do not like so well; nay, as a spot to *live on*, I think nothing at all of it, compared with a country where high downs prevail, with here and there a large wood on the top or the side of a hill, and where you see, in the deep dells, here and there a farmhouse, and here and there a village, the buildings sheltered by a group of lofty trees.

ST. SWITHIN

THE wheat, where it has begun to die, is dying of a good colour, not black, nor in any way that indicates blight. It is, however, all backward. Some few fields of white wheat are changing colour; but, for the greater part, it is quite green; and though a sudden change of weather might make a great alteration in a short time, it does appear, that the harvest must be later than usual. When I say this, however, I by no means wish to be understood as saying, that it must be so late as to be injurious to the crop. In 1816, I saw a barley-rick making in November. In 1821, I saw wheat uncut, in Suffolk, in October. If we were now to have good, bright, hot weather, for as long a time as we have had wet, the whole of the corn, in these Southern counties, would be housed, and great part of it threshed out, by the 10th of September. So that, all depends on the weather, which appears to be clearing up in spite of St. Swithin. This Saint's birthday is the 15th of July; and it is said, that, if rain fall on his birthday, it will fall on *forty days* successively. But, I believe, that you reckon retrospectively as well as prospectively; and, if this be the case, we may, this time, escape the extreme unction; for it began to rain on the 26th of June; so that it rained 19 days before the 15th of July; and, as it has rained 16 days since, it has rained,

in the whole, 35 days, and, of course, five days more will satisfy this wet soul of a saint. Let him take his five days; and there will be plenty of time for us to have wheat at four shillings a bushel.

REMINISCENCES

WE came hither by way of Waverley Abbey and Moore Park. On the commons I showed Richard some of my old hunting scenes, when I was of his age, or younger, reminding him that I was obliged to hunt on foot. We got leave to go and see the grounds at Waverley, where all the old monks' garden walls are totally gone, and where the spot is become a sort of lawn. I showed him the spot where the strawberry garden was, and where I, when sent to gather *hautboys*, used to eat every remarkably fine one, instead of letting it go to be eaten by Sir Robert Rich. I showed him a tree, close by the ruins of the Abbey, from a limb of which I once fell into the river, in an attempt to take the nest of a *crow*, which had artfully placed it upon a branch so far from the trunk as not to be able to bear the weight of a boy eight years old. I showed him an old elm tree, which was hollow even then, into which I, when a very little boy, once saw a cat go, that was as big as a middle-sized spaniel dog, for relating which I got a great scolding, for standing to which I, at last, got a beating; but stand to which I did. I have since many times repeated it; and I would take my oath of it to this day. When in New Brunswick I saw the great wild grey cat, which is there called a *Lucifer*; and it seemed to me to be just such a cat as I had seen at Waverley. I found the ruins not very greatly diminished; but it is strange how small the mansion, and ground, and everything but the trees, appeared to me. They were all great to my mind when I saw them last; and that early impression had remained, whenever I had talked or thought,

of the spot ; so that, when I came to see them again, after seeing the sea and so many other immense things, it seemed as if they had all been made small. This was not the case with regard to the trees, which are nearly as big here as they are anywhere else ; and the old cat-elm, for instance, which Richard measured with his whip, is about 16 or 17 feet round.

GAME

THE great business of life, in the country, appertains, in some way or other, to the *game*, and especially at this time of the year. If it were not for the game, a country life would be like an *everlasting honeymoon*, which would, in about half a century, put an end to the human race. In towns, or large villages, people make a shift to find the means of rubbing the rust off from each other by a vast variety of sources of contest. A couple of wives meeting in the street, and giving each other a wry look, or a look not quite civil enough, will, if the parties be hard pushed for a ground of contention, do pretty well. But in the country, there is, alas ! no such resource. Here are no walls for people to take of each other. Here they are so placed as to prevent the possibility of such lucky local contact. Here is more than room, of every sort, elbow, leg, horse, or carriage, for them all. Even at Church (most of the people being in the meeting-houses), the pews are surprisingly too large. Here, therefore, where all circumstances seem calculated to cause never-ceasing concord with its accompanying dullness, there would be no relief at all, were it not for the *game*. This, happily, supplies the place of all other sources of alternate dispute and reconciliation ; it keeps all in life and motion, from the lord down to the hedger. When I see two men, whether in a market-room, by the wayside, in a parlour, in a church-yard, or even in the church itself,

engaged in manifestly deep and most momentous discourse, I will, if it be any time between September and February, bet ten to one, that it is, in some way or other, about *the game*. The wives and daughters hear so much of it, that they inevitably get engaged in the disputes; and thus all are kept in a state of vivid animation. I should like very much to be able to take a spot, a circle 12 miles in diameter, and take an exact amount of all the *time* spent by each individual, above the age of ten (that is the age they begin at), in talking, during the game season of one year, about the game and about sporting exploits. I verily believe that it would amount, upon an average, to six times as much as all the other talk put together; and, as to the anger, the satisfaction, the scolding, the commendation, the chagrin, the exultation, the envy, the emulation, where are there any of these in the country, unconnected with *the game*?

There is, however, an important distinction to be made between *hunters* (including coursers) and *shooters*. The latter are, as far as relates to their exploits, a disagreeable class, compared with the former; and the reason of this is, their doings are almost wholly their own; while, in the case of the others, the achievements are the property of the dogs. Nobody likes to hear another talk *much* in praise of his own acts, unless those acts have a manifest tendency to produce some good to the hearer; and shooters do talk *much* of their own exploits, and those exploits rather tend to *humiliate* the hearer. Then, a *great shooter* will, nine times out of ten, go so far as almost to *lie a little*; and, though people do not tell him of it, they do not like him the better for it; and he but too frequently discovers that they do not believe him: whereas, hunters are mere followers of the dogs, as mere spectators; their praises, if any are called for, are bestowed on the greyhounds, the hounds, the fox, the hare, or the horses. There is a little rivalry in the

riding, or in the behaviour of the horses ; but this has so little to do with the personal merit of the sportsmen, that it never produces a want of good fellowship in the evening of the day. A shooter who has been *missing* all day, must have an uncommon share of good sense, not to feel mortified while the slaughterers are relating the adventures of that day ; and this is what cannot exist in the case of the hunters. Bring me into a room, with a dozen men in it, who have been sporting all day ; or, rather let me be in an adjoining room, where I can hear the sound of their voices, without being able to distinguish the words, and I will bet ten to one that I tell whether they be hunters or shooters.

I was once acquainted with a *famous shooter* whose name was William Ewing. He was a barrister of Philadelphia, but became far more renowned by his gun than by his law cases. We spent scores of days together a-shooting, and were extremely well matched. I having excellent dogs and caring little about my reputation as a shot, his dogs being good for nothing, and he caring more about his reputation as a shot than as a lawyer. The fact which I am going to relate respecting this gentleman, ought to be a warning to young men, how they become enamoured of this species of vanity. We had gone about ten miles from our home to shoot where partridges were said to be very plentiful. We found them so. In the course of a November day, he had, just before dark, shot, and sent to the farm-house, or kept in his bag, *ninety-nine* partridges. He made some few *double shots*, and he might have a *miss* or two, for he sometimes shot when out of my sight, on account of the woods. However, he said that he killed at every shot ; and, as he had counted the birds, when we went to dinner at the farm-house and when he cleaned his gun, he, just before sun-set, knew that he had killed *ninety-nine* partridges, every one upon the wing, and a great part of them in woods very thickly set with largish trees. It was a grand achievement ;

but unfortunately, he wanted to make it *a hundred*. The sun was setting, and, in that country, darkness comes almost at once ; it is more like the going out of a candle than that of a fire ; and I wanted to be off, as we had a very bad road to go, and as he, being under strict petticoat government, to which he most loyally and dutifully submitted, was compelled to get home that night, taking me with him, the vehicle (horse and gig) being mine. I, therefore, pressed him to come away, and moved on myself towards the house (that of old John Brown, in Bucks county, grandfather of that General Brown who gave some of our whiskered heroes such a rough handling last war, which was waged for the purpose of " deposing James Madison "), at which house I would have stayed all night, but from which I was compelled to go by that watchful government, under which he had the good fortune to live. Therefore I was in haste to be off. No : he would kill the *hundredth* bird ! In vain did I talk of the bad road and its many dangers for want of moon. The poor partridges, which we had scattered about, were *calling* all around us ; and, just at this moment, up got one under his feet, in a field in which the wheat was three or four inches high. He shot and *missed*. " That's it," said he, running as if to *pick up* the bird. " What ! " said I, " you don't think you *killed*, do you ? Why, there is the bird now, not only alive, but *calling* in that wood ; " which was at about a hundred yards distance. He, in that *form of words* usually employed in such cases, asserted that he had shot the bird and saw it fall ; and I, in much about the same form of words, asserted that he had *missed*, and that I, with my own eyes, saw the bird fly into the wood. This was too much ! To *miss* once out of a hundred times ! To lose such a chance of immortality ! He was a good-humoured man ; I liked him very much ; and I could not help feeling for him, when he said, " Well, Sir, I killed the bird ; and if you choose to go away and take

your dog away, so as to prevent me from *finding* it, you must do it; the dog is *yours*, to be sure." "The dog!" said I, in a very mild tone; "why, Ewing, there is the spot; and could we not see it, upon this smooth green surface, if it were there?"

However, he began to *look about*; and I called the dog, and affected to join him in the search. Pity for his weakness got the better of my dread of the bad road. After walking backward and forward many times upon about twenty yards square with our eyes to the ground, looking for what both of us knew was not there, I had passed him (he going one way and I the other), and I happened to be turning around just after I had passed him, when I saw him, putting his hand behind him, *take a partridge out of his bag and let it fall upon the ground!* I felt no temptation to detect him, but turned away my head, and kept looking about. Presently, he having returned to the spot where the bird was, called out to me, in a most triumphant tone: "*Here! here! Come here!*" I went up to him, and he, pointing with his finger down to the bird, and looking hard in my face at the same time, said, "There, Cobbett; I hope that will be a *warning* to you never to be obstinate again!" "Well," said I, "come along," and away we went as merry as larks. When we got to Brown's, he told them the story, triumphed over me most clamorously; and, though he often repeated the story to my face, I never had the heart to let him know, that I knew of the imposition which puerile vanity had induced so sensible and honourable a man to be mean enough to practise.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

[Greatest of all those poets who, dwelling in continual communion with Nature, have become her interpreters, Wordsworth was born in 1770 and died in 1850.]

THE SPARROW'S NEST

BEHOLD, within the leafy shade,
Those bright blue eggs together laid !
On me the chance-discovered sight
Gleamed like a vision of delight.
I started—seeming to espy
The home and sheltered bed,
The Sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
My Father's house, in wet or dry,
My sister Emmeline and I
Together visited.

She looked at it and seemed to fear it ;
Dreading, tho' wishing, to be near it ;
Such heart was in her, being then
A little Prattler among men.
The Blessing of my later years
Was with me when a boy :
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears ;
And humble cares, and delicate fears ;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears ;
And love, and thought, and joy.

TO A BUTTERFLY

I

STAY near me—do not take thy flight !
A little longer stay in sight !
Much converse do I find in thee,
Historian of my infancy !

Float near me ; do not yet depart !
 Dead times revive in thee :
 Thou bring'st, gay creature as thou art !
 A solemn image to my heart,
 My father's family !

O pleasant, pleasant were the days,
 The time, when in our childish plays,
 My sister Emmeline and I
 Together chased the butterfly !
 A very hunter did I rush
 Upon the prey ;—with leaps and springs
 I followed on from brake to bush ;
 But she, God love her ! feared to brush
 The dust from off its wings.

II

I've watched you now a full half-hour,
 Self-poised upon that yellow flower ;
 And, little Butterfly, indeed
 I know not if you sleep or feed.
 How motionless !—not frozen seas
 More motionless ! and then
 What joy awaits you, when the breeze
 Hath found you out among the trees,
 And calls you forth again.

This plot of orchard ground is ours,
 My trees they are, my Sister's flowers ;
 Here rest your wings when they are weary,
 Here lodge as in a sanctuary.
 Come often to us, fear no wrong ;
 Sit near us on the bough !
 We'll talk of sunshine and of song,
 And summer days, when we were young ;
 Sweet childish days, that were as long
 As twenty days are now.

THE SHEPHERD'S SON

AND, in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sate with a fettered sheep before him stretched
Under the large old oak, that near his door
Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
The CLIPPING TREE, a name which yet it bears.
There, while they two were sitting in the shade,
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the Sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up
A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek
Two steady roses that were five years old ;
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
And gave it to the Boy ; wherewith equipt
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock ;
And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help ;
And for this cause not always, I believe,
Receiving from his father hire of praise ;

Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,
Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
Against the mountain blasts : and to the heights,
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
He with his father daily went, and they
Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the Shepherd loved before
Were dearer now ? that from the Boy there came
Feelings and emanations—things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind ;
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again ?

Thus in his father's sight the Boy grew up.

THE MOUNTAIN TARN

.... THE *mountain* Tarns can only be recommended to the notice of the inquisitive traveller who has time to spare. They are difficult of access and naked ; yet some of them are, in their permanent forms, very grand ; and there are accidents of things which would make the meanest of them interesting. At all events, one of these pools is an acceptable sight to the mountain wanderer ; not merely as an incident that diversifies the prospect, but as forming in his mind a centre or conspicuous point to which objects, otherwise disconnected or insubordinated, may be referred. Some few have a varied outline, with bold heath-clad promontories ; and, as they mostly lie at the foot of a steep precipice, the water, where the sun is not shining upon it, appears black and sullen ; and, round the margin, huge stones and masses of rock are scattered ; some defying conjecture as to the means by which they came thither ; and others obviously fallen from on high—the contribution of ages ! A not unpleasing sadness is induced

by this perplexity, and these images of decay ; while the prospect of a body of pure water unattended with groves and other cheerful rural images by which fresh water is usually accompanied, and unable to give furtherance to the meagre vegetation around it — excites a sense of some repulsive power strongly put forth, and thus deepens the melancholy natural to such scenes. Nor is the feeling of solitude often more forcibly or more solemnly impressed than by the side of one of these mountain pools : though desolate and forbidding, it seems a distinct place to repair to ; yet where the visitants must be rare, and there can be no disturbance. Water-fowl flock hither ; and the lonely Angler may here be seen ; but the imagination, not content with this scanty allowance of society, is tempted to attribute a voluntary power to every change which takes place in such a spot, whether it be the breeze that wanders over the surface of the water, or the splendid lights of evening resting upon it in the midst of awful precipices.

There, sometimes does a leaping fish
Send through the tarn a lonely cheer ;
The crags repeat the raven's croak
In symphony austere :
Thither the rainbow comes, the cloud,
And mists that spread the flying shroud,
And sunbeams, and the sounding blast.

REFLECTION

In the climate of England there are, for the lover of Nature, days which are worth whole months,— I might say—even years. . . . The presence of a lake is indispensable to exhibit in perfection the beauty of one of these days ; and . . . while looking on the unruffled waters, . . . the imagination, by their aid, is carried into recesses of feeling otherwise impenetrable.

The reason of this is, that the heavens are not only brought down into the bosom of the earth, but that the earth is mainly looked at, and thought of, through the medium of a purer element. The happiest time is when the equinoctial gales are departed; but their fury may probably be called to mind by the sight of a few shattered boughs, whose leaves do not differ in colour from the faded foliage of the stately oaks from which these relics of the storm depend: all else speaks of tranquillity;—not a breath of air, no restlessness of insects, and not a moving object perceptible—except the clouds gliding in the depths of the lake, or the traveller passing along, an inverted image, whose motion seems governed by the quiet of a time, to which its archetype, the living person, is, perhaps, insensible:—or it may happen, that the figure of one of the larger birds, a raven or a heron, is crossing silently among the reflected clouds, while the voice of the real bird, from the element aloft, gently awakens in the spectator the recollection of appetites and instincts, pursuits and occupations, that deform and agitate the world,—yet have no power to prevent Nature from putting on an aspect capable of satisfying the most intense cravings for the tranquil, the lovely, and the perfect, to which man, the noblest of her creatures, is subject.

TROUT-FISHING

SUDDENLY the door

Flew open, and a pair of lusty boys
 Appeared, confusion checking their delight.
 —Not brothers they in feature or attire,
 But fond companions, so I guessed, in field,
 And by the river's margin—whence they come,
 Keen anglers with unusual spoil elated.
 One bears a willow-pannier on his back,
 The boy of plainer garb, whose blush survives

More deeply tinged. Twin might the other be
To that fair girl who from the garden-mountain
Bounded :—triumphant entry this for him !
Between his hands he holds a smooth blue stone,
On whose capacious surface see outspread
Large store of gleaming crimson-spotted trouts ;
Ranged side by side, and lessening by degrees
Up to the dwarf that tops the pinnacle.
Upon the board he lays the sky-blue stone
With its rich freight : their number he proclaims ;
Tells from what pool the noblest had been dragged :
And where the very monarch of the brook,
After long struggle, had escaped at last—
Stealing alternately at them and us
(As doth his comrade too) a look of pride :
And, verily, the silent creatures made
A splendid sight, together thus exposed ;
Dead—but not sullied or deformed by death,
That seemed to pity what he could not spare.

But O, the animation in the mien
Of those two boys ! yea, in the very words
With which the young narrator was inspired,
When, as our questions led, he told at large
Of that day's prowess ! Him might I compare,
His looks, tones, gestures, eager eloquence,
To a bold brook that splits for better speed,
And at the self-same moment, works its way
Through many channels, ever and anon
Parted and re-united : his compeer
To the still lake whose stillness is to sight
As beautiful—as grateful to the mind.

HELVELLYN FAIR

WHAT sounds are those, Helvellyn, that are heard
Up to thy summit, through the depth of air

Ascending, as if distance had the power
To make the sounds more audible? What crowd
Covers, or sprinkles o'er, yon village green?
Crowd seems it, solitary hill! to thee,
Though but a little family of men,
Shepherds and tillers of the ground—betimes
Assembled with their children and their wives,
And here and there a stranger interspersed.
They hold a rustic fair—a festival,
Such as, on this side now, and now on that,
Repeated through his tributary vales,
Helvellyn, in the silence of his rest,
Sees annually, if clouds towards either ocean
Blown from their favourite resting-place, or mists
Dissolved, have left him an unshrouded head.
Delightful day it is for all who dwell
In this secluded glen, and eagerly
They give it welcome. Long ere heat of noon,
From byre or field the kine were brought; the sheep
Are penned in cotes; the chaffering is begun.
The heifer lows, uneasy at the voice
Of a new master; bleat the flocks aloud.
Booths are there none; a stall or two is here;
A lame man or a blind, the one to beg,
The other to make music; hither, too,
From far, with basket slung upon her arm
Of hawker's wares—books, pictures, combs, and pins—
Some aged woman finds her way again,
Year after year, a punctual visitant!
There also stands a speech-maker by rote,
Pulling the strings of his boxed raree-show;
And in the lapse of many years may come
Prouder itinerant, mountebank, or he
Whose wonders in a covered wain lie hid.
But one there is, the loveliest of them all,
Some sweet lass of the valley, looking out
For gains, and who that sees her would not buy?
Fruits of her father's orchard are her wares,

And with the ruddy produce she walks round
Among the crowd, half pleased with, half ashamed
Of her new office, blushing restlessly.
The children now are rich, for the old to-day
Are generous as the young ; and, if content
With looking on, some ancient wedded pair
Sit in the shade together ; while they gaze,
“ A cheerful smile unbends the wrinkled brow,
The days departed start again to life,
And all the scenes of childhood reappear,
Faint, but more tranquil, like the changing sun,
To him who slept at noon and wakes at eve.”
Thus gaiety and cheerfulness prevail,
Spreading from young to old, from old to young,
And no one seems to want his share.—Immense
Is the recess, the circumambient world
Magnificent, by which they are embraced :
They move about upon the soft green turf.
How little they, they and their doings, seem,
And all that they can further or obstruct !
Through utter weakness pitiablely dear,
As tender infants are : and yet how great !
For all things serve them : them the morning light
Loves, as it glistens on the silent rocks ;
And then the silent rocks, which now from high
Look down upon them ; the reposing clouds ;
The wild brooks prattling from invisible haunts ;
And old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir,
Which animates this day their calm abode.

JOHN KEATS

[John Keats (1795-1821) was the son of a London livery-stable keeper. His education was not neglected, and in boyhood he could appreciate Virgil, and was a good boxer. Everything he wrote is a work of art: he is the perfect type of the artist in poetry. Revelations of the beauty of Nature abound in his work, from the phrase, "the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings" to the wonderful lines in his last sonnet,—

"The moving waters at their priest-like task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores."]

I STOOD TIP-TOE UPON A LITTLE HILL

I stood tip-toe upon a little hill,
The air was cooling and so very still
That the sweet buds which with a modest pride
Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside,
Their scanty leaved and finely tapering stems,
Had not yet lost their starry diadems
Caught from the early sobbing of the morn.
The clouds were pure and white as flocks new-shorn,
And fresh from the clear brook; sweetly they slept
On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept
A little noiseless noise among the leaves,
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves:
For not the faintest motion could be seen
Of all the shades that slanted o'er the green.
There was wide wand'ring for the greediest eye,
To peer about upon variety;
Far round the horizon's crystal air to skim,
And trace the dwindled edgings of its brim;
To picture out the quaint and curious bending
Of a fresh woodland alley, never-ending;
Or by the bowery clefts, and leafy shelves,
Guess where the jaunty streams refresh themselves.

I gazed awhile, and felt as light and free
As though the fanning wings of Mercury
Had play'd upon my heels : I was light-hearted,
And many pleasures to my vision started ;
So I straightway began to pluck a posy
Of luxuries bright, milky, soft and rosy.

A bush of May flowers with the bees about them ;
Ah, sure no tasteful nook would be without them !
And let a lush laburnum oversweep them,
And let long grass grow round the roots, to keep them
Moist, cool, and green ; and shade the violets,
That they may bind the moss in leafy nets.

A filbert hedge with wild briar overtwined,
And clumps of woodbine taking the soft wind
Upon their summer thrones ; there too should be
The frequent chequer of a youngling tree,
That with a score of light green brethren shoots
From the quaint mossiness of aged roots :
Round which is heard a spring-head of clear waters
Babbling so wildly of its lovely daughters,
The spreading blue-bells : it may haply mourn
That such fair clusters should be rudely torn
From their fresh beds, and scattered thoughtlessly
By infant hands, left on the path to die.

Open afresh your round of starry folds,
Ye ardent marigolds !
Dry up the moisture from your golden lids,
For great Apollo bids
That in these days your praises should be sung
On many harps, which he has lately strung ;
And when again your dewiness he kisses,
Tell him I have you in my world of blisses :
So haply when I rove in some far vale,
His mighty voice may come upon the gale.

Here are sweet peas, on tip-toe for a flight
With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,
And taper fingers catching at all things,
To bind them all about with tiny rings.

Linger awhile upon some bending planks
That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks,
And watch intently Nature's gentle doings :
They will be found softer than ringdoves' cooings.
How silent comes the water round that bend !
Not the minutest whisper does it send
To the o'erhanging willows : blades of grass
Slowly across the chequered shadows pass.
Why, you might read two sonnets, ere they reach
To where the hurrying freshnesses aye preach
A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds ;
Where swarms of minnows show their little heads,
Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams,
To taste the luxury of sunny beams
Tempered with coolness. How they ever wrestle
With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle
Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand !
If you but scantily hold out the hand,
That very instant not one will remain ;
But turn your eye, and they are there again.
The ripples seem right glad to reach those cresses,
And cool themselves among the em'rald tresses ;
The while they cool themselves, they freshness give,
And moisture, that the bowery green may live :
So keeping up an interchange of favours,
Like good men in the truth of their behaviours. . . .

JOHN CLARE

[John Clare, born near Peterborough in 1793, the son of a crippled pauper, grew up in direst poverty. He began to compose poems at the age of thirteen, and, after many bitter struggles, became well known. Unhappily his intellect gave way, and for many years before his death he was an inmate of an asylum. One of the many "peasant poets" of Britain, Clare's pictures are almost invariably marked by a graceful fidelity.]

SPORT IN THE MEADOWS

MAYTIME is to the meadows coming in,
And cowslip peeps have gotten c'er so big,
And water blobs and all their golden kin
Crowd round the shallows by the striding brig.
Daisies and buttercups and ladysmocks
Are all abouten shining here and there,
Nodding about their gold and yellow locks
Like morts of folken flocking at a fair.
The sheep and cows are crowding for a share
And snatch the blossoms in such eager haste
That basket-bearing children running there
Do think within their hearts they'll get them all
And hoot and drive them from their graceless waste
As though there wa'n't a cowslip peep to spare.
—For they want some for tea and some for wine
And some to maken up a cuckaball
To throw across the garland's silken line,
That reaches o'er the street from wall to wall.
—Good gracious me, how merrily they fare :
One sees a fairer cowslip than the rest,
And off they shout—the foremost bidding fair
To get the prize—and earnest half and jest
The next one pops her down—and from her hand
Her basket falls and out her cowslips all

Tumble and litter there—the merry band
In laughing friendship round about her fall
To helpen gather up the littered flowers,
That she no loss may mourn. And now the wind
In frolic mood among the merry hours
Wakens with sudden start and tosses off
Some untied bonnet on its dancing wings ;
Away they follow with a scream and laugh,
And aye the youngest ever lags behind,
Till on the deep lake's very bank it hings.
They shout and catch it and then off they start
And chase for cowslips merry as before,
And each one seems so anxious at the heart
As they would even get them all and more.
One climbs a molehill for a bunch of may,
One stands on tiptoe for a linnet's nest
And pricks her hand and throws her flowers away
And runs for plantain leaves to have it drest.
So do they run about all the day,
And tease the grass-hid larks from getting rest.
—Scarce give they time in their unruly haste
To tie a shoestring that the grass unties—
And thus they run the meadows' bloom to waste,
Till even comes and dulls their phantasies,
When one finds losses out to stifle smiles
Of silken bonnet-strings—and utters sigh
O'er garments renten clambering over stiles.
Yet in the morning fresh afield they hie,
Bidding the last day's troubles all good-bye ;
When red pied cow again their coming hears,
And ere they clap the gate she tosses up
Her head and hastens from the sport she fears :
The old yoe calls her lamb nor cares to stoop
To crop a cowslip in their company.
Thus merrily the little noisy troop
Along the grass as rude marauders hie,
For ever noisy and for ever gay
While keeping in the meadows holiday.

IN HILLY-WOOD

How sweet to be thus nestling deep in boughs,
 Upon an ashen stoven pillowing me ;
 Faintly are heard the ploughmen at their ploughs,
 But not an eye can find its way to see.
 The sunbeams scarce molest me with a smile,
 So thickly the leafy armies gather round ;
 And where they do, the breeze blows cool the while,
 Their leafy shadows dancing on the ground.
 Full many a flower, too, wishing to be seen,
 Perks up its head the hiding grass between,—
 In mid-wood silence, thus, how sweet to be ;
 Where all the noises, that on peace intrude,
 Come from the chittering cricket, bird, and bee,
 Whose songs have charms to sweeten solitude.

LITTLE TROTTY WAGTAIL

LITTLE trotty wagtail he went in the rain,
 And tittering, tottering sideways he ne'er got straight
 again ;
 He stooped to get a worm, and looked up to get a fly,
 And then he flew away ere his feathers they were dry.

Little trotty wagtail, he waddled in the mud,
 And left his little footmarks, trample where he would.
 He waddled in the water-pudge, and waggle went his
 tail,
 And chirrupt up his wings to dry upon the garden rail.

Little trotty wagtail, you nimble all about,
 And in the dimpling water-pudge you waddle in and
 out ;
 Your home is nigh at hand, and in the warm pig-stye,
 So, little Master Wagtail, I'll bid you a good-bye.

CLOCK-A-CLAY

In the cowslip pips I lie,
Hidden from the buzzing fly,
While green grass beneath me lies,
Pearled with dew like fishes' eyes,
Here I lie, a clock-a-clay,
Waiting for the time of day.

While the forest quakes surprise,
And the wild wind sobs and sighs,
My home rocks as like to fall,
On its pillar green and tall ;
When the pattering rain drives by
Clock-a-clay keeps warm and dry.

Day by day and night by night,
All the week I hide from sight ;
In the cowslip pips I lie,
In rain and dew still warm and dry ;
Day and night, and night and day,
Red, black-spotted clock-a-clay.

My home shakes in wind and showers,
Pale green pillar topped with flowers,
Bending at the wild wind's breath,
Till I touch the grass beneath ;
Here I live, lone clock-a-clay,
Watching for the time of day.

BIRDS IN ALARM

THE firetail tells the boys when nests are nigh
And tweets and flies from every passer-by.
The yellowhammer never makes a noise
But flies in silence from the noisy boys ;
The boys will come and take them every day,
And still she lays as none were ta'en away.

The nightingale keeps tweeting-churring round
But leaves in silence when the nest is found.
The pewit hollos " chewrit " as she flies
And flops about the shepherd where he lies ;
But when her nest is found she stops her song,
And cocks (her) coppled crown and runs along.
Wrens cock their tails and chitter loud and play,
And robins hollo " tut " and fly away.

SIGNS OF WINTER

THE cat runs races with her tail. The dog
Leaps o'er the orchard hedge and knarls the grass.
The swine run round and grunt and play with straw,
Snatching out hasty mouthfuls from the stack.
Sudden upon the elm-tree tops the crow
Unceremonious visit pays and croaks,
Then swops away. From mossy barn the owl
Bobs hasty out—wheels round and, scared as soon,
As hastily retires. The ducks grow wild
And from the muddy pond fly up and wheel
A circle round the village and soon, tired,
Plunge in the pond again. The maids in haste
Snatch from the orchard hedge the mizzled clothes
And laughing hurry in to keep them dry.

SPRING'S MESSENGERS

WHERE slanting banks are always with the sun
The daisy is in blossom even now ;
And where warm patches by the hedges run
The cottager when coming home from plough
Brings home a cowslip, root in flower to set.
Thus ere the Christmas goes the spring is met
Setting up little tents about the fields
In sheltered spots.—Primroses when they get

Behind the wood's old roots, where ivy shields
 Their crimped, curdled leaves, will shine and hide.
 —Cart ruts and horses' footings scarcely yield
 A slur for boys, just crizzled and that's all.
 Frost shoots his needles by the small dyke side,
 And snow in scarce a feather's seen to fall.

INSECTS

THESE tiny loiterers on the barley's beard,
 And happy units of a numerous herd
 Of playfellows, the laughing Summer brings,
 Mocking the sunshine in their glittering wings,
 How merrily they creep, and run, and fly !
 No kin they bear to labour's drudgery,
 Smoothing the velvet of the pale hedge-rose ;
 And where they fly for dinner no one knows—
 The dew-drops feed them not—they love the shine
 Of noon, whose sun may bring them golden wine.
 All day they're playing in their Sunday dress—
 Till night goes sleep, and they can do no less ;
 Then, to the heath-bell's silken hood they fly,
 And like to princes in their slumber lie,
 Secure from night, and dropping dews, and all,
 In silken beds and roomy painted hall.
 So merrily they spend their summer day,
 Now in the cornfields, now the new-mown hay.
 One almost fancies that such happy things,
 With coloured hoods and richly burnished wings,
 Are fairy folk, in splendid masquerade
 Disguised, as if of mortal folk afraid,
 Keeping their merry pranks a mystery still,
 Lest glaring day should do their secrets ill.

A COUNTRY LETTER

DEAR brother robin this comes from us all
 With our kind love and could Gip write and all

Though but a dog he'd have his love to spare
For still he knows and by your corner chair
The moment he comes in he lyes him down
and seems to fancy you are in the town.
This leaves us well in health thank God for that
For old acquaintance Sue has kept your hat
Which mother brushes ere she lays it bye
and every Sunday goes upstairs to cry
Jane still is yours till you come back agen
and neer so much as dances with the men
and ned the woodman every week comes in
and asks about you kindly as our kin
and he with this and goody Thompson sends
Remembrances with those of all our friends
Father with us sends love untill he hears
and mother she has nothing but her tears
Yet wishes you like us in health the same
and longs to see a letter with your name
So loving brother don't forget to write
Old Gip lies on the hearth stone every night
Mother can't bear to turn him out of doors
and never noises now of dirty floors
Father will laugh but lets her have her way
and Gip for kindness get a double pay
So Robin write and let us quickly see
You don't forget old friends no more than we
Nor let my mother have so much to blame
To go three journeys ere your letter came.

GRASSHOPPERS

GRASSHOPPERS go in many a thumming spring
And now to stalks of tasseled sow-grass cling,
That shakes and swees awhile, but still keeps straight;
While arching oxeye doubles with his weight.
Next on the cat-tail grass with farther bound
He springs, that bends until they touch the ground.

FIR-WOODS

THE fir trees taper into twigs and wear
 The rich blue green of summer all the year,
 Softening the roughest tempest almost calm
 And offering shelter ever still and warm
 To the small path that towels underneath,
 Where loudest winds—almost as summer's breath—
 Scarce fan the weed that lingers green below
 When others out of doors are lost in frost and snow.
 And sweet the music trembles on the ear
 As the wind suthers through each tiny spear,
 Makeshifts for leaves ; and yet, so rich they show,
 Winter is almost summer where they grow.

THE ANTS

WHAT wonder strikes the curious, while he views
 The black ant's city, by a rotten tree,
 Or woodland bank ! In ignorance we muse :
 Pausing, annoyed,—we know not what we see,
 Such government and thought there seem to be ;
 Some looking, and urging some to toil,
 Dragging their loads of bent-stalks slavishly :
 And what's more wonderful, when big loads foil
 One ant or two to carry, quickly then
 A swarm flock round to help their fellow-men.
 Surely they speak a language whisperingly,
 Too fine for us to hear ; and sure their ways
 Prove they have kings and laws, and that they be
 Deformed remnants of the Fairy-days.

JANE

(From *The Cross Roads*.)

. . . JANE in flowers delighted from a child—
 I like the garden, but she loved the wild—

And oft on Sundays young men's gifts declined,
Posies from gardens of the sweetest kind,
And eager scrambled the dog-rose to get,
And woodbine flowers at every bush she met,
The cowslip blossom, with its ruddy streak,
Would tempt her furlongs from the path to seek ;
And gay long purple, with its tufty spike,
She'd wade o'er shoes to reach it in the dyke ;
And oft, while scratching through the briary woods
For tempting cuckoo-flowers and violet buds,
Poor Jane, I've known her crying sneak to town,
Fearing her mother, when she'd torn her gown.

THE FARMER'S BOY

HE waits all day beside his little flock
And asks the passing stranger what's o'clock,
But those who often pass his daily tasks
Look at their watch and tell before he asks.
He mutters stories to himself and lies
Where the thick hedge the warmest house supplies,
And when he hears the hunters far and wide
He climbs the highest tree to see them ride—
He climbs till all the fields are bleak and bare
And makes the old crow's nest an easy chair.
And soon his sheep are got in other grounds—
He hastens down and fears his master come,
He stops the gap and keeps them all in bounds
And tends them closely till it's time for home.

BONNY MARY O !

THE morning opens fine, bonny Mary O !
The robin sings his song by the dairy O !
Where the little Jenny wrens cock their tails among
the hens,
Singing morning's happy songs with Mary O !

THE PLEASANT LAND

The swallow's on the wing, bonny Mary O !

Where the rushes fringe the spring, bonny
Mary O !

Where the cowslips do unfold, shaking tassels all of
gold,

Which make the milk so sweet, bonny Mary O !

There's the yellowhammer's nest, bonny
Mary O !

Where she hides her golden breast, bonny
Mary O !

On her mystic eggs she dwells, with strange writing on
their shells,

Hid in the mossy grass, bonny Mary O !

There the spotted cow gets food, bonny Mary O !

And chews her peaceful cud, bonny Mary O !

In the mole-hills and the bushes, and the clear brook
fringed with rushes

To fill the evening pail, bonny Mary O !

The cowpond once agen, bonny Mary O !

Lies dimpled like thysen, bonny Mary O !

Where the gnat swarms fall and rise under evening's
mellow skies,

And on flags sleep dragon flies, bonny Mary O !

And I will meet thee there, bonny Mary O !

When a-milking you repair, bonny Mary O !

And I'll kiss thee on the grass, my buxom, bonny lass,
And be thine own for aye, bonny Mary O !

THE SAILOR-BOY

'Tis three years and a quarter since I left my own fire-
side

To go aboard a ship through love, and plough the
ocean wide.

I crossed my native fields, where the scarlet poppies
grew,
And the groundlark left his nest like a neighbour which
I knew.

The pigeons from the dove-cote cooed over the old lane,
The crow flocks from the oakwood went flopping o'er
the grain ;
Like lots of dear old neighbours whom I shall see no
more
They greeted me that morning I left the English shore.

The sun was just a-rising above the heath of furze,
And the shadows grew to giants ; that bright ball
never stirs :
There the shepherds lay with their dogs by their side,
And they started up and barked as my shadow they
espied.

A maid of early morning twirled her mop upon the
moor ;
I wished her my farewell before she closed the door.
My friends I left behind me for other places new,
Crows and pigeons all were strangers as o'er my head
they flew.

Trees and bushes were all strangers, the hedges and the
lanes,
The steeples and the houses and broad untrodden
plains.
I passed the pretty milkmaid with her red and rosy
face ;
I knew not where I met her, I was strange to the place.

At last I saw the ocean, a pleasing sight to me :
I stood upon the shore of a mighty glorious sea.
The waves in easy motion went rolling on their way,
English colours were a-flying where the British squad-
ron lay.

I left my honest parents, the church clock and the
 village ;
 I left the lads and lasses, the labour and the tillage ;
 To plough the briny ocean, which soon became my
 joy—
 I sat and sang among the shrouds, a lonely sailor-boy.

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

[Miss M. R. Mitford was born at Alresford, Hampshire, in 1787, but her family settled near Reading. It was here that she produced, in 1823, the famous series of sketches known as *Our Village*, from which this extract is taken.]

SHEEP-WASHING

ONE of the gayest and noisiest operations of rural life—sheep-washing—was going on in the valley below—

“ the turmoil that unites
 Clamour of boys with innocent despites
 Of barking dogs, and bleatings from strange fear.”

WORDSWORTH.

All the inhabitants of the farm seemed assembled in the meadow. I counted a dozen, at least, of men and boys of all ages, from the stout, sunburnt, vigorous farmer of fifty, who presided over the operation, down to the eight-year-old urchin, who, screaming, running, and shaking his ineffectual stick after an eloped sheep, served as a sort of aide-de-camp to the sheep-dog. What a glorious scene of confusion it was ! what shouting ! what scuffling ! what glee ! Four or five young men, and one Amazon of a barefooted girl, with her petticoats tucked up to her knees, stood in the water where it was pent between two hurdles, ducking,

sousing, and holding down by main force, the poor, frightened, struggling sheep, who kicked, and plunged, and bleated, and butted, and, in spite of their imputed innocence, would certainly, in the ardour of self-defence, have committed half a dozen homicides, if their power had equalled their inclination. The rest of the party were fully occupied ; some in conducting the purified sheep, who showed a strong disposition to go the wrong way, back to their quarters ; others in leading the uncleansed part of the flock to their destined ablution, from which they also testified a very ardent and active desire to escape. Dogs, men, boys, and girls, were engaged in marshalling these double processions, the order of which was constantly interrupted by the outbreking of some runaway sheep, who turned the march into a pursuit, to the momentary increase of the din, which seemed already to have reached the highest possible pitch.

HARTLEY COLERIDGE

[Hartley Coleridge was the eldest son of the great S. T. Coleridge. Though not reaching his father's eminence, he was a writer of considerable merit, and in particular a great master of the sonnet.]

NOVEMBER

THE mellow year is hasting to its close ;
The little birds have almost sung their last,
Their small notes twitter in the dreary blast—
That shrill-piped harbinger of early snows ;
The patient beauty of the scentless rose,
Oft with the morn's hoar crystal quaintly glassed,
Hangs, a pale mourner of the summer past,
And makes a little summer where it grows ;

In the chill sunbeam of the faint, brief day
 The dusky waters shudder as they shine,
 The russet leaves obstruct the straggling way
 Of oozy brooks, which no deep banks define,
 And the gaunt woods, in ragged, scant array,
 Wrap their old limbs with sombre ivy-twine.

GEORGE BORROW

[George Henry Borrow, born in Norfolk in 1803, was the son of a staid, methodical captain in the Militia. But Borrow himself grew up to be a very different person—an accomplished scholar, with a taste for strange languages and for strange people, the friend of gipsies, a lover of poetry and the open air. In *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye* Borrow gives an account of his early dreams, studies, wanderings, and struggles for a livelihood. *The Bible in Spain* describes his adventures as the agent in Spain of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and *Wild Wales* is the story of a walking tour which Borrow (always a wonderful walker) took in 1854.

Jasper, mentioned in the first of the following extracts, was a gipsy friend of Borrow.]

A WIND ON THE HEATH

I now wandered along the heath, till I came to a place where, beside a thick furze, sat a man, his eyes fixed intently on the red ball of the setting sun.

"That's not you, Jasper?"

"Indeed, brother!"

"I've not seen you for years."

"How should you, brother?"

"What brings you here?"

"The fight, brother."

"Where are the tents?"

"On the old spot, brother."

"Any news since we parted?"

"Two deaths, brother."

"Who are dead, Jasper?"

"Father and mother, brother."

"What is your opinion of death, Mr. Petulengro?"
said I, as I sat down beside him.

"My opinion of death, brother, is much the same as that in the old song of Pharaoh, which I have heard my grandam sing:—

'Cana morel o manus chivios andé puv,
Ta rovel pa leste o chavo ta romi.'

When a man dies, he is cast into the earth, and his wife and child sorrow over him. If he has neither wife nor child, then his father and mother, I suppose; and if he is quite alone in the world, why, then, he is cast into the earth, and there is an end of the matter."

"And do you think that is the end of a man?"

"There's an end of him, brother, more's the pity."

"Why do you say so?"

"Life is sweet, brother."

"Do you think so?"

"Think so!—There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?"

"I would wish to die——"

"You talk like a gorgio*—which is the same as talking like a fool. Were you a Rommany Chal† you would talk wiser. Wish to die, indeed! A Rommany Chal would wish to live for ever."

"In sickness, Jasper?"

"There's the sun and stars, brother."

"In blindness, Jasper?"

"There's the wind on the heath, brother; if I could only feel that, I would gladly live for ever. Dosta,

* One not a gipsy.

† A gipsy.

we'll now go to the tents and put on the gloves ; * and I'll try to make you feel what a sweet thing it is to be alive, brother."

NIGHT IN THE DINGLE

[Borrow had left London, where his health had been severely injured by his privations ; and, in the course of his wanderings, had befriended a distressed tinker by purchasing the latter's little horse and cart and his stock-in-trade.]

I now bethought me that as I had a carriage of my own, I might as well make use of it ; I therefore got into the cart, and taking the reins in my hand, gave an encouraging cry to the pony, whereupon the sturdy little animal started again at as brisk a pace as if he had not already come many a long mile. I lay half-reclining in the cart, holding the reins lazily and allowing the animal to go just where he pleased, often wondering where he would conduct me. At length I felt drowsy, and my head sank upon my breast ; I soon aroused myself, but it was only to doze again ; this occurred several times. Opening my eyes after a doze somewhat longer than the others, I found that the drizzling rain had ceased, a corner of the moon was apparent in the heavens, casting a faint light ; I looked around for a moment or two, but my eyes and brain were heavy with slumber and I could scarcely distinguish where we were. I had a kind of dim consciousness that we were traversing an uninclosed country—perhaps a heath ; I thought, however, that I saw certain large black objects looming in the distance, which I had a confused idea might be woods or plantations. The pony still moved at his usual pace. I did not find the jolting of the cart at all disagreeable ; on the contrary, it had quite a somniferous effect upon

* Borrow was an ardent lover also of boxing.

me. Again my eyes closed ; I opened them once more, but with less perception in them than before, looked forward, and muttering something about woodlands, I placed myself in an easier posture than I had hitherto done, and fairly fell asleep.

How long I continued in that state I am unable to say, but I believe for a considerable time. I was suddenly awakened by the ceasing of the jolting to which I had become accustomed, and of which I was perfectly sensible in my sleep. I started up and looked around me ; the moon was still shining, and the face of the heaven was studded with stars. I found myself amidst a maze of bushes of various kinds, but principally hazel and holly, through which was a path or driftway with grass growing on either side, upon which the pony was already diligently browsing. I conjectured that this place had been one of the haunts of his former master, and on dismounting and looking about, was strengthened in that opinion by finding a spot under an ash tree which, from its burnt and blackened appearance, seemed to have been frequently used as a fireplace. I will take up my quarters here, thought I ; it is an excellent spot for me to commence my new profession in ; I was quite right to trust myself to the guidance of the pony. Unharnessing the animal without delay, I permitted him to browse at free will on the grass, convinced that he would not wander far from a place to which he was so much attached. I then pitched the little tent close beside the ash tree to which I have alluded, and conveyed two or three articles into it, and instantly felt that I had commenced housekeeping for the first time in my life. Housekeeping, however, without a fire is a very sorry affair—something like the housekeeping of children in their toy houses ; of this I was the more sensible from feeling very cold and shivering, owing to my late exposure to the rain, and sleeping in the night air. Collecting, therefore, all the dry sticks and furze I could find, I

placed them upon the fireplace, adding certain chips and a billet which I found in the cart, it having apparently been the habit of Slingsby to carry with him a small store of fuel. Having then struck a spark in a tinder-box and lighted a match, I set fire to the combustible heap, and was not slow in raising a cheerful blaze. I then drew my cart near the fire, and seating myself on the shafts, hung over the fire with feelings of intense pleasure and satisfaction. Having continued in this posture for a considerable time, I turned my eyes to the heaven in the direction of a particular star. I, however, could not find the star, nor indeed many of the starry train, the greater number having fled, from which circumstance, and from the appearance of the sky, I concluded that morning was nigh. About this time I again began to feel drowsy; I therefore arose, and having prepared for myself a kind of couch in the tent, I flung myself upon it and went to sleep.

I will not say I was awakened in the morning by the carolling of birds, as I perhaps might if I were writing a novel. I awoke because, to use vulgar language, I had slept my sleep out, not because the birds were carolling around me in numbers, as they had probably been for hours without my hearing them. I got up and left my tent; the morning was yet more bright than that of the preceding day. Impelled by curiosity, I walked about endeavouring to ascertain to what place chance, or rather the pony, had brought me. Following the driftway for some time, amidst bushes and stunted trees, I came to a grove of dark pines through which it appeared to lead. I tracked it a few hundred yards, but seeing nothing but trees, and the way being wet and sloughy, owing to the recent rain, I returned on my steps, and pursuing the path in another direction, came to a sandy road leading over a common, doubtless the one I had traversed the preceding night. My curiosity satisfied, I returned to my

little encampment, and on the way beheld a small footpath on the left winding through the bushes, which had before escaped my observation. Having reached my tent and cart, I breakfasted on some of the provisions which I had procured the day before, and then proceeded to take a regular account of the stock formerly possessed by Slingsby the tinker, but now become my own by right of lawful purchase.

I passed the greater part of the day in endeavouring to teach myself the mysteries of my new profession. I cannot say I was very successful, but the time passed agreeably, and was therefore not ill spent. Towards evening I flung my work aside, took some refreshment, and afterwards a walk.

This time I turned up the small footpath of which I have already spoken. It led in a zigzag manner through thickets of hazel, elder, and sweet-brier; after following its windings for somewhat better than a furlong, I heard a gentle sound of water, and presently came to a small rill, which ran directly across the path. I was rejoiced at the sight, for I had already experienced the want of water, which I yet knew must be nigh at hand, as I was in a place to all appearance occasionally frequented by wandering people, who I was aware never take up their quarters in a place where water is difficult to be obtained. Forthwith I stretched myself on the ground, and took a long and delicious draught of the crystal stream, and then, seating myself in a bush, I continued for some time gazing on the water as it purled tinkling away on its channel through an opening in the hazels, and should probably have continued much longer, had not the thought that I had left my property unprotected compelled me to rise and return to my encampment.

Night came on, and a beautiful night it was; up rose the moon, and innumerable stars decked the firmament of heaven. I sat on the shaft, my eyes turned upwards. I had found it; there it was, twin-

klings millions of miles above me, mightiest star of the system to which we belong : of all stars the one which has most interest for me—the star Jupiter.

BORROW AT STONEHENGE

AFTER standing still a minute or two, considering what I should do, I moved down what appeared to be the street of a small straggling town ; presently I passed by a church, which rose indistinctly on my right hand ; anon there was the rustling of foliage, and the rushing of waters. I reached a bridge, beneath which a small stream was running in the direction of the south. I stopped and leaned over the parapet, for I have always loved to look upon streams, especially at the still hours. “ What stream is this, I wonder ? ” said I, as I looked down from the parapet into the water which whirled and gurgled below.

Leaving the bridge, I ascended a gentle acclivity, and presently reached what appeared to be a tract of moory undulating ground. It was now tolerably light, but there was a mist or haze abroad which prevented my seeing objects with much precision. I felt chill in the damp air of the early morn, and walked rapidly forward. In about half an hour I arrived where the road divided into two, at an angle or tongue of dark green sward. “ To the right or the left ? ” said I, and forthwith took, without knowing why, the left-hand road, along which I proceeded about a hundred yards, when in the midst of the tongue of sward formed by the two roads, collaterally with myself, I perceived what I at first conceived to be a small grove of blighted trunks of oaks, barked and gray. I stood still for a moment, and then, turning off the road, advanced slowly towards it over the sward ; as I drew nearer, I perceived that the objects which had attracted my curiosity, and which formed a kind of circle, were not trees, but immense

upright stones. A thrill pervaded my system ; just before me were two, the mightiest of the whole, tall as the stems of proud oaks, supporting on their tops a huge transverse stone, and forming a wonderful doorway. I knew now where I was, and laying down my stick and bundle, and taking off my hat, I advanced slowly, and cast myself—it was folly, perhaps, but I could not help what I did—cast myself, with my face on the dewy earth, in the middle of the portal of giants, beneath the transverse stone.

The spirit of Stonehenge was strong upon me. And after I had remained with my face on the ground for some time, I arose, placed my hat on my head, and taking up my stick and bundle, wandered round the wondrous circle, examining each individual stone, from the greatest to the least ; and then, entering by the great door, seated myself upon an immense broad stone, one side of which was supported by several small ones, and the other slanted upon the earth ; and there, in deep meditation, I sat for an hour or two, till the sun shone in my face above the tall stones of the eastern side.

And as I still sat there, I heard the noise of bells, and presently a large number of sheep came browsing past the circle of stones ; two or three entered, and grazed upon what they could find, and soon a man also entered the circle at the northern side.

“ Early here, sir,” said the man, who was tall, and dressed in a dark green slop, and had all the appearance of a shepherd ; “ a traveller, I suppose ? ”

“ Yes,” said I, “ I am a traveller ; are these sheep yours ? ”

“ They are, sir ; that is, they are my master’s. A strange place this, sir,” said he, looking at the stones ; “ ever here before ? ”

“ Never in body, frequently in mind.”

“ Heard of the stones, I suppose ; no wonder—all the people of the plain talk of them.”

"What do the people of the plain say of them?"

"Why, they say—How did they ever come here?"

"Do they not suppose them to have been brought?"

"Who should have brought them?"

"I have read that they were brought by many thousand men."

"Where from?"

"Ireland."

"How did they bring them?"

"I don't know."

"And what did they bring them for?"

"To form a temple, perhaps."

"What is that?"

"A place to worship God in."

"A strange place to worship God in."

"Why?"

"It has no roof."

"Yes, it has."

"Where?" said the man, looking up.

"What do you see above you?"

"The sky."

"Well?"

"Well!"

"Have you anything to say?"

"How did these stones come here?"

"Are there other stones like these on the plains?" said I.

"None; and yet there are plenty of strange things on these downs."

"What are they?"

"Strange heaps, and barrows, and great walls of earth built on the tops of hills."

"Do the people of the plain wonder how they came there?"

"They do not."

"Why?"

"They were raised by hands."

"And these stones?"

"How did they ever come here?"

"I wonder whether they are here?" said I.

"These stones?"

"Yes."

"So sure as the world," said the man, "and, as the world, they will stand as long."

"I wonder whether there is a world."

"What do you mean?"

"An earth, and sea, moon and stars, sheep and men."

"Do you doubt it?"

"Sometimes."

"I never heard it doubted before."

"It is impossible there should be a world."

"It ain't possible there shouldn't be a world."

"Just so." At this moment a fine ewe, attended by a lamb, rushed into the circle, and fondled the knees of the shepherd.

"I suppose you would not care to have some milk," said the man.

"Why do you suppose so?"

"Because, so be there be no sheep, no milk, you know; and what there ben't is not worth having."

"You could not have argued better," said I; "that is, supposing you have argued; with respect to the milk you may do as you please."

"Be still, Nanny," said the man; and producing a tin vessel from his scrip, he milked the ewe into it. "Here is milk of the plains, master," said the man, as he handed the vessel to me.

"Where are those barrows and great walls of earth you were speaking of?" said I, after I had drunk some of the milk; "are there any near where we are?"

"Not within many miles; the nearest is yonder away," said the shepherd, pointing to the south-east. "It's a grand place, that, but not like this; quite different, and from it you have a sight of the finest spire in the world."

"I must go to it," said I, and I drank the remainder of the milk; "yonder, you say?"

"Yes, yonder; but you cannot get to it in that direction, the river lies between."

"What river?"

"The Avon."

"Avon is British," said I.

"Yes," said the man, "we are all British here."

"No, we are not," said I.

"What are we then?"

"English."

"Ain't they one?"

"No."

"Who were the British?"

"The men who are supposed to have worshipped God in this place, and who raised these stones."

"Where are they now?"

"Our forefathers slaughtered them, spilled their blood all about, especially in this neighbourhood, destroyed their pleasant places, and left not, to use their own words, one stone upon another."

"Yes, they did," said the shepherd, looking aloft at the transverse stone.

"And it is well for them they did; whenever that stone, which English hands never raised, is by English hands thrown down, woe, woe, woe to the English race; spare it, English! Hengist spared it!—Here is sixpence."

"I won't have it," said the man.

"Why not?"

"You talk so prettily about these stones; you seem to know all about them."

"I never receive presents; with respect to the stones, I say with yourself, How did they ever come here?"

"How did they ever come here?" said the shepherd.

Leaving the shepherd, I bent my way in the direction pointed out by him as that in which the most remark-

able of the strange remains of which he had spoken lay. I proceeded rapidly, making my way over the downs covered with grass and fern ; with respect to the river of which he had spoken, I reflected that either by wading or swimming, I could easily transfer myself and what I bore to the opposite side. On arriving at its banks, I found it a beautiful stream, but shallow, with here and there a deep place where the water ran dark and still.

Always fond of the pure lymph, I undressed, and plunged into one of these gulfs, from which I emerged, my whole frame in a glow, and tingling with delicious sensations. After conveying my clothes and scanty baggage to the farther side, I dressed, and then with hurried steps bent my course in the direction of some lofty ground ; I at length found myself on a high road leading over wide and arid downs ; following the road for some miles without seeing anything remarkable, I supposed that I had taken the wrong path, and wended on slowly and disconsolately for some time, till, having nearly surmounted a steep hill, I knew at once, from certain appearances, that I was near the object of my search. Turning to the right near the brow of the hill, I proceeded along a path which brought me to a causeway leading over a deep ravine, and connecting the hill with another which had once formed part of it, for the ravine was evidently the work of art. I passed over the causeway, and found myself in a kind of gateway, which admitted me into a square space of many acres surrounded on all sides by mounds or ramparts of earth. Though I had never been in such a place before, I knew that I stood within the precincts of what had been a Roman encampment, and one probably of the largest size, for many thousand warriors might have found room to perform their evolutions in that space, in which corn was now growing, the green ears waving in the morning wind.

After I had gazed about the space for a time, stand-

ing in the gateway formed by the mounds, I clambered up the mound to the left hand, and on the top of that mound I found myself at a great altitude ; beneath, at the distance of a mile, was a fair old city, situated among verdant meadows, watered with streams, and from the heart of that old city, from amidst mighty trees, I beheld towering to the sky the finest spire in the world.

WILLIAM BARNES

[Though not a peasant like Clare, Barnes was a true son of the country, being descended from a line of yeoman-farmers. Born in Dorsetshire in 1800, he spent most of his life in that county. Most gentle and lovable of men, he exhibits the same qualities in his poems. It is difficult to parallel the sweetness, patience, and grace of his *Poems of Rural Life, in the Dorset Dialect.*]

THE SHEPHERD O' THE FARM

OH! I be shepherd o' the farm,
 Wi' tinklèn bells an' sheep-dog's bark,
 An' wi' my crook a-thirt my eärm,
 Here I do rove below the lark.

An' I do bide all day among
 The bleatèn sheep, an' pitch their vwold ;
 An' when the evenèn sheaðes be long,
 Do zee em all a-penn'd an' twold.

An' I do zee the friskèn lam's,
 Wi' swingèn tails an' woolly lags,
 A-playèn roun' their veedèn dams,
 An' pullèn o' their milky bags.

An' I beside a hawthorn tree,
Do zit upon the zunny down,
While sheädes o' zummer clouds do vlee
Wi' silent flight along the groun'.

An' there, among the many cries
O' sheep an' lambs, my dog do pass
A zultry hour, wi' blinkèn eyes,
An' nose a-strach'd upon the grass;

But, in a twinklèn, at my word,
He's all awake, an' up, an' gone
Out roun' the sheep lik' any bird,
To do what he's a-zent upon.

An' I do goo to washèn pool,
A-sousèn over head an' ears
The shaggy sheep, to cleän their wool
An' meake 'em ready for the sheärs.

An' when the shearèn time do come,
Then we do work vrom dawn till dark;
Zome shearèn o' the sheep, and zome
A-markèn o'm wi' meäster's mark.

An' when the shearèn's all a-done,
Then we do eat, an' drink, an' zing,
In meäster's kitchen till the tun
Wi' merry sounds do sheäke an' ring.

Oh! I be shepherd o' the farm,
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An' wi' my crook a-thirt my cärm
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FALSE FRIENDS-LIKE

WHEN I wer still a bwoy, an' mother's pride,
 A bigger bwoy spoke up to me so kind-like,
 "If you do like, I'll treat ye wi' a ride
 In theāse wheel-barrow here." Zoo I were blind-like
 To what he had a-workèn in his mind-like,
 An' mounted vor a passenger inside;
 An' comèn to a puddle, perty wide,
 He tipp'd me in, a-grinnèn back behind-like.
 Zoo when a man do come to me so thick-like,
 An' sheāke my hand, where woonce he pass'd me by,
 An' tell me he would do me this or that,
 I can't help thinkèn o' the big bwoy's trick-like.
 An', vor all I can but wag my hat
 An' thank en, I do veel a little shy.

HAÿ-CARRÈN

'Tis merry ov a zummer's day,
 When vo'k be out a-haulèn haÿ,
 Where boughs, a-spread upon the ground,
 Do meāke the staddle big an' round;
 An' grass do stand in pook, or lie
 In long-backed weāles or parsels, dry.
 There I do vind it stir my heart
 To hear the frothèn hosses snort,
 A-haulèn on, wi' sleek-heāir'd hides,
 The red-wheel'd waggon's deep-blue zides.

The bwoy is at the hosse's head,
 An' up upon the waggon bed
 The lwoaders, strong o' eārm, do stan',
 At head, an' back at tail, a man,
 WY skill to build the lwoad upright
 An' bind the vvolded corners tight;

An' at each zide ō'm, sprack an' strong,
A pitcher wi' his long-stem'd prong,
Avore the best two women now
A-call'd to reäky after plough.

'Tis merry at the rick to zee
How picks do wag, an' haÿ do vlee.
While woone's unlwoadèn, woone do teäke
The pitches in ; an' zome do meäke
The lofty rick upright an' roun',
An' tread en hard, an' reäke en down,
An' tip en, when the zun do zet,
To shoot a sudden vall o' wet.
An' zoo 'tis merry any day
Where vo'k be out a-carrèn haÿ.

MEÄRY WEDDED

THE zun can zink, the stars mid rise,
An' woods be green to sheenèn skies ;
The cock mid crow to mornèn light,
An' workvo'k zing to vallèn night ;
The birds mid whissle on the spray,
An' childern leap in merry play,
But ours is now a lifeless pleäce,
Vor we've a-lost a smilèn feäce—
 Young Meäry Meäd o' merry mood,
 Vor she's a-woo'd, an' wedded.

The dog that woonce wer glad to bear
Her fondlèn vingers down his heäir,
Do lean his head ageän the vloer,
To watch, wi' heavy eyes, the door ;
An' men she zent so happy hwome
O' Zaterdays, do seem to come

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 An' workvo'k zing to vall'n night;
 The birds mid whistle on the spray,
 An' childern leap in merry play,
 But ours is now a lifeless place,
 Vor we've a-lost a smil'n face —
 Young Meäry Meäid o' merry meel,
 Vor she's a-wro'd, an' wo-bled.

The dog that we once wör plad to hear
 Her fondlin vänge as down he leär,
 Daken hi' head up to the wheer,
 To watch, wif heavy eyes, the d'oor;
 An' ne'er be zent out happy he'er
 O' Zee-day, the sun be here.

THE PLEASANT LAND

To door wi' downcast hearts, to miss,
 Wi' smiles below the clematis,
 Young Meäry Meäd o' merry mood,
 Vor she's a-woo'd an' wedded.

The day she left her father's he'th,
 Though sad, wer kept a day o' m'th,
 An' dry-wheel'd waggons' empty beds
 Wer left 'ithin the tree-screen'd sheds ;
 An' all the hosses, at their eäse,
 Went snortèn up the flow'ry leäse,
 But woone, the smartest for the roäd,
 That pull'd away the dearest lwoad—
 Young Meäry Meäd o' merry mood,
 That wer a-woo'd an' wedded.

THE WELSHNUT * TREE

WHEN in the evenèn the zun's a-zinkèn,
 A-drowèn sheädes vrom the yollow west,
 An' mother, weary, 's a-zot a-thinkèn,
 Wi' vwolded cārms by the vire at rest,
 Then we do zwarm, O,
 Wi' such a charm, O,
 So vull o' glee by the welshnut tree.

A-leävèn father in-doors, a-leinèn
 In his gre't chair in his easy shoes,
 Or in the settle so high behine en,
 While down beside en the dog do snooze,
 Our tongues do run, O,
 Enough to stun, O,
 Your head wi' glee by the welshnut tree.

* Walnut.

An' when, at last, at the drashel, mother
 Do call us, smilèn, in-door to rest,
 Then we do cluster by woone another,
 To see hwome them we do love the best :
 An' then do sound, O,
 " Good-night," all round, O,
 To end our glee by the welshnut tree.

THE MILK-MAID O' THE FARM

O POLL's the milk-maid o' the farm !
 An' Poll's so happy out in groun'
 Wi' her white pail below her cārm
 As if she wore a goolden crown.

An' Poll don't zit up half the night,
 Nor lie vor half the day a-bed :
 An' zoo her eyes be sparklèn bright,
 An' zoo her cheäks be always red.

In zummer mornèns, when the lark
 Do rouse the cārly lad and lass
 To work, then she's the vu'st to mark
 Her steps upon the dewy grass.

An' in the even'n, when the sun
 Do sheen upon the western brow
 O' hills, where bubbl'n brooks do run,
 Then she do zing beäde her soon.

An' ev'ry row of lars do t' red,
 An' niver occurred her p'f
 Nor try to buck her round her l'f
 Nor watch her with her b'ny tall.

THE PLEASANT LAND

Noo leady wi' her muff an' vail
 Do walk wi' sich a steately tread
 As she do, wi' her milkèn pail
 A-balance'd on her comely head.

An' she at mornèn an' at night
 Do skim the yollow cream, an' mould
 An' wring her cheeses red an' white,
 An' zee the butter vetch'd an' roll'd.

Zoo Poll's the milk-maid o' the farm !
 An' Poll's so happy out in groun'
 Wi' her white pail below her eàrm
 As if she wore a goolden crown.

SAMUEL SMILES

[Thomas Edward, the son of a Scotch hand-loom linen weaver, was born in 1814. Even as a very small child he displayed an intense love for animals of all kinds, and his incurable habit of carrying about in his pockets his pet "beasties," led to his expulsion from three schools. Edward was apprenticed to a shoemaker, and this calling remained his source of livelihood throughout his life. But the great passion of his life was Nature, and in spite of poverty, imperfect education, and lack of help, he made himself one of the great naturalists of the nineteenth century. The following extracts are from *Life of a Scotch Naturalist*, by Samuel Smiles.]

CAPTURE OF AN ADDER

[When this incident occurred, Edward was but six years of age.]

DURING one of his excursions on the hills of Torrie, near the commencement of the Grampians, while looking for blackberries and cranberries, Edward saw some-

thing like the flash of an eel gliding through the heather. He rushed after it, and pounced down upon it with both hands, but the animal had escaped. He began to tear up the heather in order to get at it. His face streamed with perspiration. He rested for a time and then began again. Still there was no animal, nor a shadow of one.

At this time another boy came up, and asked, "What are ye doing there?" "Naething." "D'ye call that naething?" pointing to about a cart-load of heather torn up. "Have ye lost onything?" "No." "What are ye looking for then?" "For something like an eel." "An eel!" quoth the lad; "do ye think ye'll find an eel amang heather? It's been an *adder*, and it's well ye have na' gotten it. The beast might have bitten ye to death." "No fear o' that," said Edward. "How long is it sin' ye saw it?" "Some minutes." "If that's the case, it may be some miles up the hills by this time. Which way was it gaun?" "That way." "Well," said the lad, "you see that heap o' stones up there? Try them, and if you do not find it there, you may gang hame and come back again, and then ye'll be as near finding it as ye are now." "Will ye help me?" asked Edward. "Na, faith, I dinna want to be bitten to death." And so saying, he went away.

Edward then proceeded to the pile of stones which had been pointed out, to make a search for the animal. He took stone after stone off the heap, and still there was no eel. There were plenty of worms and insects, but these he did not want. A little beyond the stones lay a large piece of turf. He turned it over, and there the creature was. He was down upon it in an instant, and had it in his hand. He looked at the beast. It was not an eel. It was very like an ask,* but was six or seven times longer.

* Lizard.

Having tightened his grip of the beast, for it was trying to wriggle out of his hand, he set out for home. He struck the Dee a little below where the Chain Bridge now stands, reaching the ford opposite Dee village, and prepared to cross it. But the water being rather deep at the time, he had to strip and wade across, carrying his clothes in one hand and the "eel" in the other. He had only one available hand, so that getting off and on his clothes, and wading the river breast high, occupied some time.

On reaching the top of Carmelite Street, he observed his mother, Mrs. Kelmar, and some other women, standing together at the street door. He rushed in amongst them with great glee, and holding up his hand exclaimed, "See, mother, sic a bonny beastie I've gotten." On looking at the object he held in his hand the conclave of women speedily scattered. They flew in all directions. Edward's mother screamed, "The Lord preserv's! what the sorrow's that ye hae noo?" "Oh, Meggy, Meggy," said Mrs. Kelmar, "it's a snake. Dinna let him in! For ony sake, dinna let him in, or we'll a' be bitten." The entry door was then shut and bolted, and Tom was left out with the beast in his hand.

Mrs. Kelmar's husband then made his appearance. "What's this, Tam, that has caused such a flutter amongst the wives?" "Only this bit beastie." Kelmar started back. "What, has it not bitten you?" "No." "Well," he added, "the best thing you can do with it is to take it to Dr. Ferguson as fast as you can, for you can't be allowed to bring it in here."

Dr. Ferguson kept a druggist's shop. He had a number of creatures suspended in glass jars in his window. Boys looked in at these wonderful things. They were the admiration of the neighbours. Tom had often been there before with big grubs, piebald snails, dragon-flies, and yellow puddocks. So he went to Dr. Ferguson with his last new prize.

He was by this time surrounded by a number of boys like himself. They kept, however, at a respectable distance. When he moved in their direction, they made a general stampede. At length he arrived at the Doctor's door. When the Doctor saw the wriggling thing that he was holding in his hand, he ordered him out of the shop, and told him to wait in the middle of the street until he had got a bottle ready for the reception of the animal. Tom waited until the bottle was ready, when he was told that when he had gotten the snake in, he must cork the bottle as firmly as possible. The adder was safely got in and handed to the Doctor, who gave Tom fourpence for his treasure. Next day it appeared in the window, to the general admiration of the inhabitants.

A NATURALIST'S SELF-EDUCATION

It was a great disadvantage to Edward that his education should have been so much neglected in his boyhood. He had, it is true, been at three schools before he was six years old, but he was turned away from them all because of his love of "beasts." He had learned comparatively little from his schoolmasters, who knew little themselves, and perhaps taught less. He was able to read, though with difficulty. Arithmetic was to him a thing unknown. He had not even learned to write. It was scarcely possible that he could have learned much in his boyhood, for he went to work when he was only six years old.

Edward had to begin at the beginning with everything. As we have already said, he knew next to nothing of books. He did not possess a single work on Natural History. He did not know the names of the birds and animals that he caught. For many years after he had begun his researches, his knowledge of natural objects was obtained by chance. He knew

little of the nature and habits of the creatures he went to seek ; he scarcely knew where or how to find them. Yet his very absence of knowledge proved a source of inexhaustible pleasure to him. All that he learnt of the form, habits, and characteristics of birds and animals was obtained by his own personal observation. His knowledge had been gathered and accumulated by himself. It was his own.

It was a misfortune to Edward that after he had attained manhood, he was so shy and friendless. He was as solitary as Wordsworth's Wanderer. He had no friend of any sort to direct him in his studies—none even to lend him books from which he might have obtained some assistance. He associated very little with his fellow-workers. They thought him an odd, wandering, unsettled creature. Why should he not, as they did, enjoy himself at the public-house ? Instead of doing this, Edward plodded homewards so soon as his day's work was over.

There was, however, one advantage which Edward possessed, and it compensated him for many difficulties. He was an intense lover of Nature. Everything that lived and breathed had charms for him. He loved the fields, the woods, the moors. The living presence of the earth was always about him, and he eagerly drank in its spirit. The bubbling brooks, the whispering trees, the aspects of the clouds, the driving wind, were all sources of delight. He felt himself free amidst the liberty of Nature. The ocean in its devious humours—sometimes peacefully slumbering, or laving the sands with murmuring kisses at his feet ; then, full of life and motion, carrying in and out the fishermen's boats along the shores of the firth ; or roaring with seeming agony, dashing itself in spray against the rock-bound coast—these sights and scenes were always a source of wonderment. As his wanderings were almost invariably conducted at night, he had abundant opportunities of seeing not only the ocean

but the heavens in their various aspects. What were these stars so far off in the sky? Were they worlds? Were they but the outposts of the earth, from which other worlds were to be seen, far beyond the ken of the most powerful telescope?

To use Edward's own words: "I can never succeed in describing my unbounded admiration of the works of the Almighty; not only the wonderful works which we ourselves see upon earth, but those wondrous and countless millions of orbs which roll, both near and far, in the endless immensity of space—the Home of Eternity. Every living thing that moves, or lives; everything that grows, everything created or formed by the hand or the will of the Omnipotent, has such a fascinating charm for me, and sends such a thrill of pleasure through my whole frame, that to describe my feelings is utterly impossible."

NIGHT WANDERERS

ALTHOUGH it is comparatively easy to observe the habits of animals by day, it is much more difficult to do so at night. Edward was compelled by circumstances to work at shoemaking by day, and to work at Natural History by night. He went out in fine starlit nights, in moonlight nights, and in cold and drizzling nights. Weather never daunted him. When it rained, he would look out for a hole in a bank and thrust himself into it, feet foremost. He kept his head and his gun out, watching and waiting for any casualties that might happen. He knew of two such holes, both in sandbanks and both in woods, which he occasionally frequented. They were foxes' or badgers' dens. If any of these gentry were inside when he took up his position they did not venture to disturb him. If they were out they did the same, except on one occasion when a badger endeavoured to dislodge him, showing its teeth. He was obliged to shoot it.

THE PLEASANT LAND

Although he was frequently out in winter-time, especially in moonlight, his principal night work occurred between spring and autumn. The stillest, and usually the darkest part of the night—unless when the moon was up—was from about an hour after sunset until about an hour before sunrise. Yet, during that sombre time, when not asleep, he seldom failed to hear the sounds of voices, near at hand or at a distance, of midnight wanderers prowling about. In the course of a few years he learnt to know all the beasts and birds of the district frequented by him. He knew the former by their noises and gruntings, and the latter by the sound of their wings when flying.

When he made his first night expeditions to the inland country, the hoarse-like *bark* of the roe-deer, and the timid-like *bleak-bleak* of the hare puzzled him very much. He attributed these noises to other animals, before he was able, by careful observation, to attribute them to their true sources. Although the deer wanders about at all hours of the night, occasionally grunting or barking, it does not usually feed at that time. The hare, on the other hand, feeds even during the darkest nights, and in spring and the early part of summer it utters its low cry of *bleak-bleak*. This cry is very different from that which it utters when snared or half-shot. Its cry for help is then most soul-pitying: it is like the tremulous voice of an infant, even to the quivering of its little innocent lips.

While Edward found that the deer and hare were among the animals that wandered about a good deal in the dark, he did not find that the rabbit was a night roamer, though he occasionally saw it moving about by moonlight. He often watched the rabbits going into their burrows at sunset; and he also observed them emerging from them a little before sunrise. But there was one thing about the rabbit that perplexed and puzzled him. It did not emit any cry, such as the hare does; but he often heard the rabbit *tap-tap*

in a particular manner. How was this noise caused ? He endeavoured to ascertain the cause by close observation.

Early one morning, when he was lying under a whin-bush, about twenty yards from the foot of a sandy knoll, where there were plenty of rabbit-holes, he was startled by hearing a loud tap-tapping almost close to where he lay. The streaks of day were just beginning to appear. Parting the bush gently aside and looking through it, he observed a rabbit thud-thudding its hind feet upon the ground close to the mouth of another rabbit's hole.

Edward continued to watch the rabbit. After he had finished his tapping at the first hole, he went along the hillock and began tap-tapping at another. He went on again. He would smell the ground about the hole first, and would sometimes pass without tapping. At last he got to a hole where his progress was stopped. After he had given only two or three thuds, out rushed a full-grown rabbit, and flew at the disturber of the peace. He rushed at him with such fury that they both rolled headlong down hill, until they reached the bottom.

There they had a rare set-to—a regular rabbit fight. Rabbits are fools at fighting. Their object seems to be to leap over each other, and to kick the back of their enemy's head as they fly over ; each trying to jump the highest and to kick the hardest. It is a matter of jumping and kicking. Yet rabbits have an immense power in their hinder feet. They often knock each other down by this method of fighting. They also occasionally fight like rams—knocking their heads hard together. Then they reel and tumble, until they recover, and are at it again, until one or the other succumbs.

Edward is of opinion that the method pursued by the male rabbits, of tapping in front of their neighbours' holes, is to attract the attention of the females.

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Edward is of opinion that the method pursued by the male rabbits, of tapping in front of their neighbours' holes, is to attract the attention of the female.

When the male comes out instead of the female, a fight occurs such as that above described. At other times, the rabbit that taps is joined by other rabbits from the holes, and a friendly conference takes place. But, besides this loud beating with their heels, the rabbits possess another method of communicating with their fellows. They produce a sound like *tap-pat*! which is the sign of danger. Edward often saw numbers of them frisking and gambolling merrily about the mouths of their burrows, but when the sound of *tap-pat* was heard, the whole of the rabbits, young and old, rushed immediately to their holes.

Among the true night-roamers are the fox, the otter, the badger, the polecat, the stoat, the weasel, the hedgehog, the rat, and almost the whole family of mice. These are, for the most part, nocturnal in their habits. No matter how dark and tempestuous the night, they are constantly prowling about. Even at the sea-shore the otter, the weasel, and the mice often paid Edward a visit. When on the hills or moors he often saw the weasel, and sometimes the fox; but the fields and the sides of woods were the places where they were most frequently met with. All these animals, like the deer and hare, have their peculiar and individual calls, which they utter at night.

Thus the fox may be known by his *bark*, which resembles that of the poodle-dog, with a little of the yelp in it; and he repeats this at intervals varying from about six to eighteen minutes between each. When suddenly surprised, the fox gives vent to a sharp, harsh growl, and shows and snaps his teeth. "I once," said Edward, "put my walking staff into the mouth of a fox just roused from his lair—for foxes do not always live in holes—to see how the fellow would act. He worried the stick and took it away with him. I have, on three different occasions, come upon two foxes occupying the same lair at the same time—twice on the cliffs by the sea, and once among the

bushes in an old and disused quarry. In one instance I came upon them in mid-winter, and in the other two cases during summer."

The badger utters a kind of snarling *grunt*. This is done in quick succession. Then he is silent for a short time, and again he begins in the same strain. The otter and most of the other night roamers have a sort of *squeak*, which they utter occasionally. But though there is a difference between them, which Edward could distinguish, it is very difficult to describe it in words. Their screams, however, differ widely from their ordinary call. The scream is the result of alarm or pain, perhaps of a sudden wound; the call is their nightly greeting when they hold friendly converse with each other; but the difference in the screams can only be learnt by the ear.

The field-mice—the "wee timorous beasties" of Burns—besides their squeaking, lilt a low and not unmusical ditty for hours together. Edward often heard them about him, sometimes quite near him, sometimes beneath his head. He occasionally tried to clutch them, but on opening his hand he found it filled with grass, moss, or leaves. The result of his observations was that several, if not the whole of the mouse race are possessed, more or less, of the gift of singing.

The otter, polecat, stoat, and weasel have a knack of *blowing* or *hissing* when suddenly come upon, or when placed at bay. The three latter stand up on their hind feet in a menacing attitude. Sometimes they suddenly dart forward and give battle when they see no other way of escape. This is especially the case with the females when they have their young about them. Edward once saw a weasel, after hiding her family amongst a cairn of stones, ascend to the top, and, muttering something all the while, by her threatening attitude, and fierce showing of her teeth, dare any one to approach her under penalty of immediate attack.

A bite of a weasel, or polecat, or badger, or otter is anything but agreeable. The bites of the weasel and the polecat are the worst. There seems to be some poison in their bites, for the part bitten soon becomes inflamed, and the bite is long in healing. The whole of this group of animals are of the same bold, fearless, and impetuous disposition. They are also remarkably impertinent and aggressive, not hesitating to attack man himself, especially when they see him showing the slightest symptoms of cowardice. Take the following illustrations, communicated by Edward himself :—

“Returning one morning from an excursion in the Buchan district, when between Fraserburgh and Penan I felt so completely exhausted by fatigue, want of sleep, and want of food (for my haversack had become exhausted), that I went into a field near the road, lay down by a dyke-side, and fell fast asleep. I had not slept long, however, when I was awakened by something cold pressing in betwixt my forehead and the edge of my hat. There were some small birds in my hat which I had shot, and they were wrapped in wadding. On putting up my hand to ascertain the meaning, I got hold of a weasel, which had been trying to force its way into the birds. I threw him away to some distance amongst the grass, and went to sleep again. The fellow came back in a few minutes, and began the same trick. I gripped him hard this time, and tossed him across the dyke into another field, but not before he had bitten my hands. I began to close my eyes once more when again the prowler approached. At last, despairing of peace, I left the spot where I had been seated, and went into a small plantation about a hundred yards off; and now, I thought, I would surely get a nap in comfort. But the weasel would not be refused. He had followed in my track. I had scarcely closed my eyes before he was at me again. He was trying to get into my hat. I awoke and shoved him off. Again he tried it, and again he

escaped. By this time I was thoroughly awake. I was a good deal nettled at the pertinacity of the brute, and yet could not help admiring his perseverance. But thinking it was now high time to put an end to the game, instead of falling asleep I kept watch. Back he came, nothing daunted by his previous repulses. I suffered him to go on with his operations until I found my hat about to roll off. I then throttled and eventually strangled the audacious little creature, though my hand was again bitten severely. After getting a few winks of sleep, I was again able to resume my journey."

One of the most severe encounters that Edward ever had with a nocturnal roamer was with a polecat, or fumart, in the ruined castle of the Boyne. The polecat is of the same family as the weasel, but it is longer, bigger, and stronger. It is called "fumart" because of the foetid odour which it emits when irritated or attacked. It is an extremely destructive brute, especially in the poultry yard, where it kills far more than it eats. Its principal luxury seems to be to drink the blood and suck the brains of the animals it kills. It destroys everything that the gamekeeper wishes to preserve. Hence the destructive war that is so constantly waged against the polecat.

The ruined castle of the Boyne, about five miles west of Banff, was one of Edward's favourite night haunts. The ruins occupy the level summit of a precipitous bank forming the eastern side of a ravine, through which the little river Boyne flows. One of the vaults, level with the ground, is used as a sheltering place for cattle. Here Edward often took refuge during rain, or while the night was too dark to observe. The cattle soon got used to him. When the weather was dry and the animals fed or slept outside, Edward had the vault to himself. On such occasions he was visited by rats, rabbits, owls, weasels, polecats, and other animals. One night, as he was lying upon a stone, dozing or sleeping, he was awakened by something pat-patting

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against his legs. He thought it must be a rabbit or a rat, as he knew they were about the place. He only moved his legs a little so as to drive the creature away. But the animal would not go. Then he raised himself up, and away it went ; but the night was so dark that he did not see what the animal was. Down he went again to try and get a sleep ; but before a few minutes had elapsed he felt the same pat-patting ; on this occasion it was higher up his body. He now swept his hand across his breast, and thrust the intruder off. The animal shrieked as it fell to the ground. Edward knew the shriek at once. It was a polecat.

He shifted his position a little, so as to be opposite the doorway, where he could see his antagonist betwixt him and the sky. He also turned upon his side in order to have more freedom to act. He had in one of his breast pockets a water-hen which he had shot that evening, and he had no doubt that this was the bait which attracted the polecat. He buttoned up his coat to his chin, so as to prevent the bird from being carried away by force. He was now ready for whatever might happen. Edward must tell the rest of the story in his own words :—

“ Well, just as I hoped and expected, in about twenty minutes I observed the fellow entering the vault, looking straight in my direction. He was very cautious at first. He halted, and looked behind him. He turned a little, and looked out. I could easily have shot him now, but that would have spoilt the sport ; besides, I never wasted my powder and shot upon anything that I could take with my hands. Having stood for a few seconds, he slowly advanced, keeping his nose on the ground. On he came. He put his forefeet on my legs, and stared me full in the face for about a minute. I wondered what he would do next—whether he would come nearer or go away. When satisfied with his look at my face, he dropped his feet and ran out of the vault. I was a good deal disappointed, and I

feared that my look had frightened him. By no means. I was soon reassured by hearing the well-known and ominous *squeak-squeak* of the tribe. It occurred to me that I was about to be assaulted by a legion of polecats, and that it might be best to beat a retreat.

"I was just in the act of rising when I saw my adversary once more make his appearance at the entrance. He seemed to be alone. I slipped quietly down again to my former position, and waited his attack. After a rather slow and protracted march, in the course of which he several times turned his head towards the door—a manœuvre which I did not at all like—he at last approached me. He at once leapt upon me, and looked backwards to the entrance. I lifted my head, and he looked full in my face. Then he leapt down, and ran to the entrance once more, and gave a *squeak*. No answer. He returned, and leapt upon me again. He was now in a better position than before, but not sufficiently far up for my purpose. Down went his nose, and up, up he crawled over my body towards the bird in my breast pocket. His head was low down, so that I couldn't seize him.

"I lay as still as death; but being forced to breathe, the movement of my chest made the brute raise his head, and at that moment I gript him by the throat! I sprang instantly to my feet, and held on. But I actually thought that he would have torn my hands to pieces with his claws. I endeavoured to get him turned round, so as to get my hand to the back of his neck. Even then I had enough to do to hold him fast. How he screamed and yelled! What an unearthly noise in the dead of night! The vault rung with his howlings! And then what an awful stench he emitted during his struggles. The very jackdaws in the upper stories of the castle began to caw! Still I held my hold. But I could not prevent his yelling at the top of his voice. Although I gripped and squeezed him

Mountcoffer. He had fallen asleep with his head upon the stock of his gun. Before he entered the burrow he had caught a field-mouse, which he wished to take home alive. He therefore tied a string round its tail, attaching the other end of the string (which was about six feet long) to his waistcoat. The little fellow had thus the liberty of the length of his tether.

While Edward was sleeping soundly he was awakened by something tugging at his waistcoat, and then by hearing a terrific series of yells, mingled with screeches, close at his head. He was confused and bewildered at first, and did not know where he was, or what the dreadful noises meant. Recovering his recollection, and opening his eyes, he looked about him. He remembered the mouse, and pulled back the string to which it had been attached. The mouse was gone. Nothing but the skin of its tail remained. He looked up, and saw an owl sitting on a tree a few yards off. He had doubtless begun to scream when he found that his capture of the mouse was resisted by the string attached to its tail.

EDWARD'S LOVE OF NATURE SAVES HIM FROM DEATH

[At one unhappy period of his life Edward, faced with ruin and starvation, determined to commit suicide.]

It is scarcely to be wondered at if, under these deplorable circumstances, despair should have got the better, at least for a time, of his overtaxed and sensitive brain. He was in a strange place—a place which had once known him, but knew him no more. His wife and his five children were altogether dependent upon him. He was deep in debt, for which, if not liquidated, his collection would be seized—a collection rather than part with which he would have sacrificed his life. At the same time, the loss of work, starva-

tion, and ruin stared him in the face. Is it surprising that, thus situated, despair should for a time have got the mastery over his better and sounder judgment?

He rushed down Union Street on his way to the sands. At first he thought of going to the Dee at the Craiglug; but he bethought himself that it would be better to go to the seashore, where it might be thought his death was accidental. From the time of his leaving the shop until about four hours afterwards, when he recovered his senses, his memory remained almost a complete blank. He had a vague idea of crossing the links and seeing some soldiers at the foot of the Broadhill. But beyond that he remembered next to nothing. He remembered, however, the following circumstance:—

He had thrown off his hat, coat, and waistcoat before rushing into the sea, when a flock of sanderlings lit upon the sands near him. They attracted his attention. They were running to and fro, some piping their low, shrill whistle, whilst others were probing the wet sand with their bills as the waves receded. But amongst them was another bird, larger, darker, and apparently of different habits to the others. Desirous of knowing something of the nature of this bird, he approached the sanderlings. They rose and flew away. He followed them. They lit again, and again he observed the birds as before. Away they went, and he after them. At length he was stopped at the Donmouth. When he recovered his consciousness he was watching the flock of birds flying away to the farther side of the river. He had forgotten all his miseries in his intense love of Nature. His ruling passion had saved him.

How long the chase lasted he never could tell. It must have occupied him more than an hour. He found himself divested of his hat, coat, and vest, and he went back to look for them. He had no further desire to carry out the purpose for which he had de-

scended to the sea. His only thought was about the strange bird among the sanderlings.

H. D. THOREAU

[The following extracts are from *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, by H. D. Thoreau. The author, a well-known American writer and philosopher, lived for nearly two and a half years in a hut which he himself built on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts. His account of his experiences and reflections during that time forms a most fascinating volume. Thoreau died at the age of forty-five in 1862. He may appear to be out of place in a book entitled *The Pleasant Land of England*, but his point of view and his sympathies are so like our own that no apology appears to be needed for the inclusion of the following passages, which may be used for making many interesting comparisons.]

BUILDING THE HOUSE

NEAR the end of March 1845 I borrowed an axe and went down to the woods by Walden Pond, nearest to where I intended to build my house, and began to cut down some tall arrowy white pines, still in their youth, for timber. It is difficult to begin without borrowing, but perhaps it is the most generous course thus to permit your fellow-men to have an interest in your enterprise. The owner of the axe, as he released his hold on it, said that it was the apple of his eye; but I returned it sharper than I received it. It was a pleasant hillside where I worked, covered with pine woods, through which I looked out on the pond, and a small open field in the woods where pines and hickories were springing up. The ice in the pond was not yet dissolved, though there were some open spaces, and it was all dark-coloured and saturated with water. There were some slight flurries of snow during the day that I worked

there ; but for the most part when I came out on to the railroad, on my way home, its yellow sand-heap stretched away gleaming in the hazy atmosphere, and the rails shone in the spring sun, and I heard the lark and pewee and other birds already come to commence another year with us. They were pleasant spring days, in which the winter of man's discontent was thawing as well as the earth, and the life that had lain torpid began to stretch itself. One day, when my axe had come off and I had cut a green hickory for a wedge, driving it with a stone, and had placed the whole to soak in a pond hole in order to swell the wood, I saw a striped snake run into the water, and he lay on the bottom, apparently without inconvenience, as long as I staid there, or more than a quarter of an hour ; perhaps because he had not yet fairly come out of the torpid state. It appeared to me that for a like reason men remain in their present low and primitive condition ; but if they should feel the influence of the spring of springs arousing them, they would of necessity rise to a higher and more ethereal life. I had previously seen the snakes in frosty mornings in my path with portions of their bodies still numb and inflexible, waiting for the sun to thaw them. On the 1st of April it rained and melted the ice, and in the early part of the day, which was very foggy, I heard a stray goose groping about over the pond and cackling as if lost, or like the spirit of the fog.

So I went on for some days cutting and hewing timber, and also studs and rafters, all with my narrow axe, not having many communicable or scholar-like thoughts, singing to myself,—

“ Men say they know many things ;
But lo ! they have taken wings,—
The arts and sciences,
And a thousand appliances ;
The wind that blows
Is all that anybody knows.”

I hewed the main timbers six inches square, most of the studs on two sides only, and the rafters and floor timbers on one side, leaving the rest of the bark on, so that they were just as straight and much stronger than sawed ones. Each stick was carefully mortised or tenoned by its stump, for I had borrowed other tools by this time. My days in the woods were not very long ones; yet I usually carried my dinner of bread and butter, and read the newspaper in which it was wrapped at noon, sitting amid the green pine boughs which I had cut off, and to my bread was imparted some of their fragrance, for my hands were covered with a thick coat of pitch. Before I had done I was more the friend than the foe of the pine tree, though I had cut down some of them, having become better acquainted with it. Sometimes a rambler in the wood was attracted by the sound of my axe, and we chatted pleasantly over the chips which I made.

By the middle of April, for I made no haste in my work, but rather made the most of it, my house was framed and ready for the raising. I had already bought the shanty of James Collins, an Irishman who worked on the Fitchbourg Railroad, for boards. James Collins' shanty was considered an uncommonly fine one. When I called to see it he was not at home. I walked about the outside, at first unobserved from within, the window was so deep and high. It was of small dimensions, with a peaked cottage roof, and not much else to be seen, the dirt being raised five feet all round as if it were a compost heap. The roof was the soundest part, though a good deal warped and made brittle by the sun. Doorsill there was none, but a perennial passage for the hens under the door board. Mrs. Collins came to the door and asked me to view it from the inside. The hens were driven in by my approach. It was dark, and had a dirt floor for the most part, dank, clammy, and aguish, only here a board and there a board which would not bear removal. She a lamp to ch

me the inside of the roof and the walls, and also that the board floor extended under the bed, warning me not to step into the cellar, a sort of dusthole two feet deep. In her own words, they were "good boards overhead, good boards all around, and a good window"—of two whole squares originally, only the cat had passed out that way lately. There was a stove, a bed, and a place to sit, an infant in the house where it was born, a silk parasol, gilt-framed looking-glass, and a patent new coffee-mill nailed to an oak sapling, all told. The bargain was soon concluded, for James had in the meanwhile returned. I to pay four dollars and twenty-five cents to-night, he to vacate at five to-morrow morning, selling to nobody else meanwhile: I to take possession at six. It were well, he said, to be there early, and anticipate certain indistinct but wholly unjust claims on the score of ground-rent and fuel. This he assured me was the only encumbrance. At six I passed him and his family on the road. One large bundle held their all—bed, coffee-mill, looking-glass, hens—all but the cat; she took to the woods and became a wild cat, and, as I learned afterward, trod in a trap set for woodchucks, and so became a dead cat at last.

I took down this dwelling the same morning, drawing the nails, and removed it to the pond-side by small cartloads, spreading the boards on the grass there to bleach and warp back again in the sun. One early thrush gave me a note or two as I drove along the woodland path. I was informed treacherously by a young Patrick that neighbour Seeley, an Irishman, in the interval of the carting, transferred the still tolerable straight and drivable nails, staples, and spikes to his pocket, and then stood when I came back to pass the time of day, and look freshly up, unconcerned, with spring thoughts, at the devastation, there being a dearth of work, as he said. He was there to represent spectatordom, and help make this seemingly in-


significant event one with the removal of the gods of Troy.

I dug my cellar in the side of a hill sloping to the south, where a woodchuck had formerly dug his burrow, down through sumach and blackberry roots, and the lowest stain of vegetation, six feet square by seven deep, to a fine sand where potatoes would not freeze in any winter. The sides were left shelving, and not stoned ; but the sun having never shone on them, the sand still keeps its place. It was but two hours' work. I took particular pleasure in this breaking of ground, for in almost all latitudes men dig into the earth for an equable temperature. Under the most splendid house in the city is still to be found the cellar where they store their roots as of old, and long after the superstructure has disappeared posterity remark its dent in the earth. The house is still but a sort of porch at the entrance of a burrow.

At length, at the beginning of May, with the help of some of my acquaintances, rather to improve so good an occasion for neighbourliness than from any necessity, I set up the frame of my house. No man was ever more honoured in the character of his raisers than I. They are destined, I trust, to assist at the raising of loftier structures one day. I began to occupy my house on the 4th of July, as soon as it was boarded and roofed, for the boards were carefully feather-edged and lapped, so that it was perfectly impervious to rain, but before boarding I laid the foundation of a chimney at one end, bringing two cartloads of stones up the hill from the pond, in my arms. I built the chimney after my hoeing in the fall, before a fire became necessary for warmth, doing my cooking in the meanwhile out of doors on the ground, early in the morning ; which mode I still think is in some respects more convenient and agreeable than the usual one. When it stormed before my bread was baked, I fixed a few boards over the fire, and sat under them to watch my loaf, and

passed some pleasant hours in that way. In those days, when my hands were much employed, I read but little, but the least scraps of paper which lay on the ground, my holder, or tablecloth, afforded me as much entertainment; in fact, answered the same purpose as the *Iliad*.

It would be worth the while to build still more deliberately than I did, considering, for instance, what foundation a door, a window, a cellar, a garret, have in the nature of man, and perchance never raising any superstructure until we found a better reason for it than our temporal necessities even. There is some of the same fitness in a man's building his own house that there is in a bird's building its own nest. Who knows but if men constructed their dwellings with their own hands, and provided food for themselves and families simply and honestly enough, the poetic faculty would be universally developed, as birds universally sing when they are so engaged? But, alas! we do like cow-birds and cuckoos, which lay their eggs in nests which other birds have built, and cheer no traveller with their chattering and unmusical notes. Shall we forever resign the pleasure of construction to the carpenter? What does architecture amount to in the experience of the mass of men? I never in all my walks came across a man engaged in so simple and natural an occupation as building his house. We belong to the community. It is not the tailor alone who is the ninth part of a man; it is as much the preacher, and the merchant, and the farmer. Where is this division of labour to end? and what object does it finally serve? No doubt another *may* also think for me; but it is not therefore desirable that he should do so to the exclusion of my thinking for myself.

Before winter I had my chimney, and shingled the sides of my house. The roof was already impervious to rain, with imper-

 The roof was already impervious to rain, with imper-

first slice of the log, whose edges I was obliged to straighten with a plane.

I have thus a tight shingled and plastered house, ten feet wide by fifteen long, eight feet posts, with a large window on each side, two trap-doors, one door at the end, and a brick fire-place opposite.

THE BEAN-FIELD

I PLANTED about two acres and a half of upland ; and as it was only about fifteen years since the land was cleared, and I myself had got out two or three cords of stumps, I did not give it any manure ; but in the course of the summer it appeared by the arrow-heads which I turned up in hoeing, that an extinct nation had anciently dwelt here and planted corn and beans ere white men came to clear the land, and so, to some extent, had exhausted the soil for this very crop.

Before yet any woodchuck or squirrel had run across the road, or the sun had got above the shrub oaks, while all the dew was on, though the farmers warned me against it—I would advise you to do all your work if possible while the dew is on—I began to level the ranks of haughty weeds in my bean-field and throw dust upon their heads. Early in the morning I worked bare-footed, dabbling like a plastic artist in the dewy and crumbling sand, but later in the day the sun blistered my feet. There the sun lighted me to hoe beans, passing slowly backward and forward over that yellow gravelly upland, between the long green rows, fifteen rods, the one end terminating in a shrub oak copse where I could rest in the shade, the other in a black-berry field where the green berries deepened their tints by the time I had made another bout. Removing the weeds, putting fresh soil about the bean stems, and encouraging this weed which I had sown, making the yellow soil express its summer thought in bean leaves

and blossoms rather than in wormwood and piper and millet grass, making the earth say beans instead of grass,—this was my daily work. As I had little aid from horses or cattle, or hired men or boys, or improved implements of husbandry, I was much slower, and became much more intimate with my beans than usual. But labour of the hands, even when pursued to the verge of drudgery, is perhaps never the worst form of idleness.

Near at hand, upon the topmost spray of a birch, sings the brown thrasher—or red mavis, as some love to call him—all the morning, glad of your society, that would find out another farmer's field if yours were not here. While you are planting the seed, he cries, "Drop it, drop it; cover it up, cover it up; pull it up, pull it up, pull it up." But this was not corn, and so it was safe from such enemies as he. You may wonder what his rigmarole, his amateur Paganini performances on one string or on twenty, have to do with your planting, and yet prefer it to leached ashes or plaster. It was a cheap sort of top-dressing in which I had entire faith.

As I drew a still fresher soil about the rows with my hoe, I disturbed the ashes of unchronicled nations who in primeval years lived under these heavens, and their small implements of war and hunting were brought to the light of this modern day. They lay mingled with other natural stones, some of which bore the marks of having been burned by Indian fires, and some by the sun, and also bits of pottery and glass brought hither by the recent cultivators of the soil. When my hoe tinkled against the stones, that music echoed to the woods and the sky, and was an accompaniment to my labour which yielded an instant and immeasurable crop. It was no longer beans that I hoed nor I that hoed beans; and I remembered with as much pity as pride, if I remembered at all, my acquaintances who had gone to the city to attend oratories. The night-hawk circled overhead in the sunny afternoons—for I

sometimes made a day of it—like a mote in the eye, or in heaven's eye, falling from time to time with a swoop and a sound as if the heavens were rent, torn at last to very rags and tatters, and yet a seamless cope remained ; small imps that fill the air and lay their eggs on the ground on bare sand or rocks on the tops of hills, where few have found them ; graceful and slender like ripples, caught up from the pond ; as leaves are raised by the wind to float in the heavens ; such kindredship is in Nature. The hawk is aerial brother of the wave which he sails over and surveys, those his perfect air-inflated wings answering to the elemental unfledged pinions of the sea. Or sometimes I watched a pair of hen-hawks circling high in the sky, alternately soaring and descending, approaching and leaving one another, as if they were the embodiment of my own thoughts. Or I was attracted by the passage of wild pigeons from this wood to that, with a slight quivering winnowing sound and carrier haste ; or from under a rotten stump my hoe turned up a sluggish, portentous, and outlandish salamander, a trace of Egypt and the Nile, yet our contemporary. When I paused to lean on my hoe, these sounds and sights I heard and saw anywhere in the row, a part of the inexhaustible entertainment which the country offers.

THE PONDS

OCCASIONALLY, after my hoeing was done for the day, I joined some impatient companion who had been fishing on the pond since morning, as silent and motionless as a duck or a floating leaf, and, after practising various kinds of philosophy, had concluded commonly, by the time I arrived, that he belonged to the ancient sect of Cœnobites. There was one older man, an excellent fisher and skilled in all kinds of woodcraft, who was pleased to look upon my house as a building erected

or the convenience of fishermen : and I was equally pleased when he sat in my doorway to arrange his lines. Once in a while we sat together on the pond, he at one end of the boat and I at the other ; but not many words passed between us, for he had grown deaf in his later years, but he occasionally hummed a psalm, which harmonized well enough with my philosophy. Our intercourse was thus altogether one of unbroken harmony, far more pleasing to remember than if it had been carried on by speech. When, as was commonly the case, I had none to commune with, I used to raise the echoes by striking with a paddle on the side of my boat, filling the surrounding woods with circling and dilating sound, stirring them up as the keeper of a menagerie his wild beasts, until I elicited a growl from every wooded vale and hillside.

In warm evenings I frequently sat in the boat playing the flute, and saw the perch, which I seemed to have charmed, hovering around me, and the moon travelling over the ribbed bottom, which was strewn with the wrecks of the forest. Formerly I had come to this pond adventurously, from time to time, in dark summer nights, with a companion, and making a fire close to the water's edge, which we thought attracted the fishes, we caught pouts with a bunch of worms strung on a thread, and when we had done, far in the night, throw the burning brands high into the air like sky-rockets, which, coming down into the pond, were quenched with a loud hissing, and we were suddenly creeping in total darkness. Through this, whistling a tune, we took our way to the haunts of men again. But now I had made my home by the shore.

Sometimes, after staying in a village parlour till the family had all retired, I have returned to the woods, as I, partly with a view to the next day's dinner, spent the hours of midnight fishing from a boat by moonlight, surrounded by owls and foxes, and hearing, from time to time, the creaking note of some unknown bird close

at hand. These experiences were very memorable and valuable to me,—anchored in forty feet of water, and twenty or thirty rods from the shore, surrounded sometimes by thousands of small perch and shiners, dimpling the surface with their tails in the moonlight, and communicating by a long flaxen line with mysterious nocturnal fishes which had their dwelling forty feet below, or sometimes dragging sixty feet of line about the pond as I drifted in the gentle night breeze, now and then feeling a slight vibration along it, indicative of some life prowling about its extremity, of dull uncertain blundering purpose there, and slow to make up its mind. At length you slowly raise, pulling hand over hand, some horned pout squeaking and squirming to the upper air. It was very queer, especially in dark nights, when your thoughts had wandered to vast and cosmogonical themes in other spheres, to feel this faint jerk, which came to interrupt your dreams and link you to Nature again. It seemed as if I might next cast my line upward into the air, as well as downward into this element which was scarcely more dense. Thus I caught two fishes, as it were, with one hook.

I have seen our river, when, the landscape being covered with snow, both water and ice were almost as green as grass. Some consider blue "to be the colour of pure water, whether liquid or solid." But, looking directly into our waters from a boat, they are seen to be of very different colours. Walden is blue at one time and green at another, even from the same point of view. Lying between the earth and the heavens, it partakes of the colour of both. Viewed from a hill-top it reflects the colour of the sky, but near at hand it is of a yellowish tint next the shore where you can see the sand, then a light green, which gradually deepens to a uniform dark green in the body of the pond. In some lights, viewed even from a hill-top, it is of a vivid green next the shore. Some have referred this to the reflection

of the verdure; but it is equally green there against the railroad sand-bank, and in the spring, before the leaves are expanded, and it may be simply the result of the prevailing blue mixed with the yellow of the sand. Such is the colour of its iris. This is that portion, also, where in the spring, the ice being warmed by the heat of the sun reflected from the bottom, and also transmitted through the earth, melts first and forms a narrow canal about the still frozen middle. Like the rest of our waters, when much agitated, in clear weather, so that the surface of the waves may reflect the sky at the right angle, or because there is more light mixed with it, it appears at a little distance of a darker blue than the sky itself; and at such a time, being on its surface, and looking with divided vision, so as to see the reflection, I have discerned a matchless and indescribable light blue, such as watered or changeable silks and sword blades suggest, more cerulean than the sky itself, alternating with the original dark green on the opposite sides of the waves, which last appeared but muddy in comparison. It is a vitreous greenish blue, as I remember it, like those patches of the winter's sky seen through cloud vistas in the west before sundown. Yet a single glass of its water held up to the light is as colourless as an equal quantity of air. It is well known that a large plate of glass will have a green tint, owing, as the makers say, to its "body," but a small piece of the same will be colourless. How large a body of Walden water would be required to reflect a green tint I have never proved. The water of our river is black or a very dark brown to one looking directly down on it, and, like that of most ponds, imparts to the body of one bathing in it a yellowish tinge; but this water is of such crystalline purity that the body of the bather appears of an alabaster whiteness, still more unnatural, which, as the limbs are magnified and distorted withal, produces a monstrous effect, making fit studies for a Michael Angelo.

THE BATTLE OF THE ANTS

ONE day when I went out to my wood-pile, or rather my pile of stumps, I observed two large ants, the one red, the other much larger, nearly half an inch long, and black, fiercely contending with one another. Having once got hold they never let go, but struggled and wrestled and rolled on the chips incessantly. Looking farther, I was surprised to find that the chips were covered with such combatants, that it was not a *duellum* but a *bellum*, a war between two races of ants, the red always pitted against the black, and frequently two red ones to one black. The legions of these Myrmidons covered all the hills and vales in my wood-yard, and the ground was already strewn with the dead and dying, both red and black. It was the only battle I have ever witnessed, the only battlefield I ever trod while the battle was raging ; internecine war ; the red republicans on the one hand, and the black imperialists on the other. In the meanwhile there came along a single red ant on the hillside of this valley, evidently full of excitement, who either had dispatched his foe, or had not yet taken part in the battle. He saw this unequal combat from afar,—for the blacks were nearly twice the size of the red—he drew near with rapid pace till he stood on his guard within half an inch of two combatants ; then, watching his opportunity, he sprang upon the black warrior, and commenced his operations near the root of his right fore-leg, leaving the foe to select among his own members ; and so there were three united for life, as if a new kind of attraction had been invented which put all other locks and cements to shame.

I took up the chip on which the three were struggling, carried it into my house, and placed it under a tumbler on my window sill, in order to see the issue. Holding a microscope to the first-mentioned red ant, I

saw that, though he was assiduously gnawing at the near fore-leg of his enemy, having severed his remaining feeler, his own breast was all torn away, exposing what vitals he had there to the jaws of the black warrior, whose breast-plate was apparently too thick for him to pierce; and the dark carbuncles of the sufferer's eyes shone with ferocity such as war only could excite. They struggled half an hour longer under the tumbler, and when I looked again the black soldier had severed the heads of his foes from their bodies, and the still living heads were hanging on either side of him like ghastly trophies at his saddle-bow, still apparently as firmly fastened as ever, and he was endeavouring with feeble struggles, being without feelers and with only the remnant of a leg, and I know not how many other wounds, to divest himself of them; which at length, after half an hour more, he accomplished. I raised the glass, and he went off over the window-sill in that crippled state. Whether he finally survived that combat, and spent the remainder of his days in some Hôtel des Invalides, I do not know; but I thought that his industry would not be worth much thereafter. I never learned which party was victorious, nor the cause of the war: but I felt for the rest of that day as if I had had my feelings excited and harrowed by witnessing the struggle, the ferocity and carnage, of a human battle before my door.

WINTER ANIMALS

For sounds in winter nights, and often in winter days, I heard the forlorn but melodious notes of a hooting owl from far; such a sound as the frozen earth would yield if struck with a suitable plectrum, the very *hooting* of Walden Wood, and quite familiar to me at last, though I never saw the bird while it was making it. I opened my door in a winter even-

ing without hearing it; *Hoo hoo hoo, hoorer hoo*, sounded sonorously, and the first three syllables accented somewhat like *how der do*; or sometimes *hoo hoo* only. One night in the beginning of winter, before the pond froze over, about nine o'clock, I was startled by the loud honking of a goose, and, stepping to the door, heard the sound of their wings like a tempest in the woods as they flew low over my house. They passed over the pond toward Fairhaven, seemingly deterred from settling by my light, their commodore honking all the while with a regular beat. Suddenly an unmistakable cat-owl from very near me, with the most harsh and tremendous voice I ever heard from any inhabitant of the woods, responded at regular intervals to the goose, as if determined to expose and disgrace this intruder from Hudson's Bay by exhibiting a greater compass and volume of voice in a native, and *boo-hoo* him out of Concord horizon. What do you mean by alarming the citadel at this time of night consecrated to me? Do you think I am ever caught napping at such an hour, and that I have not got lungs and a larynx as well as yourself? *Boo-hoo, boo-hoo, boo-hoo!* It was one of the most thrilling discords I ever heard. And yet, if you had a discriminating ear, there were in it the elements of a concord such as these plains never saw nor heard.

I also heard the whooping of the ice in the pond, my great bed-fellow in that part of Concord, as if it were restless in its bed and would fain turn over—were troubled with flatulency and bad dreams; or I was waked by the cracking of the ground by the frost, as if some one had driven a team against my door, and in the morning would find a crack in the earth a quarter of a mile long and a third of an inch wide.

Sometimes I heard the foxes as they ranged over the snow crust, in moonlight nights, in search of a partridge or other game, barking raggedly and demoniacally like forest dogs, as if labouring with some anxiety, or seek-

ing expression, struggling for light and to be dogs outright and run freely in the streets ; for if we take the ages into our account, may there not be a civilization going on among brutes as well as men ? They seemed to me to be rudimental, burrowing men, still standing on their defence, awaiting their transformation. Sometimes one came near to my window, attracted by my light, barked a vulpine curse at me, and then retreated.

Usually the red squirrel (*Sciurus Hudsonius*) waked me in the dawn, coursing over the roof and up and down the sides of the house, as if sent out of the woods for this purpose. In the course of the winter I threw out half a bushel of ears of sweet-corn, which had not got ripe, on to the snow crust by my door, and was amused by watching the motions of the various animals which were baited by it. In the twilight and the night the rabbits came regularly and made a hearty meal. All day long the red squirrels came and went, and afforded me much entertainment by their manœuvres. One would approach at first warily through the shrub-oaks, running over the snow crust by fits and starts like a leaf blown by the wind, now a few paces this way, with wonderful speed and waste of energy, making inconceivable haste with his " trotters," as if it were for a wager, and now as many paces that way, but never getting on more than half a rod at a time ; and then suddenly pausing with a ludicrous expression and a gratuitous somerset, as if all the eyes of the universe were fixed on him,—for all the motions of a squirrel, even in the most solitary recesses of the forest, imply spectators as much as those of a dancing girl,—wasting more time in delay and circumspection than would have sufficed to walk the whole distance,—I never saw one walk,—and then suddenly, before you could say Jack Robinson, he would be in the top of a young pitch-pine, winding up his clock and chiding all imaginary spectators, soliloquizing and talking to all the universe at the same time—for no reason that I could ever

detect, or he himself was aware of, I suspect. At length he would reach the corn, and selecting a suitable ear, brisk about in the same uncertain trigonometrical way to the topmost stick of my wood-pile, before my window, where he looked me in the face, and there sit for hours, supplying himself with a new ear from time to time, nibbling at first voraciously and throwing the half-naked cobs about ; till at length he grew more dainty still and played with his food, tasting only the inside of the kernel, and the ear, which was held balanced over the stick by one paw, slipped from his careless grasp and fell to the ground, when he would look over at it with a ludicrous expression of uncertainty, as if suspecting that it had life, with a mind not made up whether to get it again, or a new one, or be off ; now thinking of corn, then listening to hear what was in the wind. So the little impudent fellow would waste many an ear in a forenoon ; till at last, seizing some longer and plumper one, considerably bigger than himself, and skilfully balancing it, he would set out with it to the woods, like a tiger with a buffalo, by the same zigzag course and frequent pauses, scratching along with it as if it were too heavy for him and falling all the while, making its fall a diagonal between a perpendicular and horizontal, being determined to put it through at any rate ;—a singularly frivolous and whimsical fellow ;—and so he would get off with it to where he lived, perhaps carry it to the top of a pine tree forty or fifty rods distant, and I would afterwards find the cobs strewn about the woods in various directions.

At length the jays arrive, whose discordant screams were heard long before, as they were warily making their approach an eighth of a mile off, and in a stealthy and sneaking manner they flit from tree to tree, nearer and nearer, and pick up the kernels which the squirrels have dropped. Then, sitting on a pitch-pine bough, they attempt to swallow in their haste a kernel which

is too big for their throats and chokes them ; and after great labour they disgorge it, and spend an hour in the endeavour to crack it by repeated blows with their bills. They were manifestly thieves, and I had not much respect for them ; but the squirrels, though at first shy, went to work as if they were taking what was their own.

When the ground was not yet quite covered, and again near the end of the winter, when the snow was melted on my south hillside and about my wood-pile, the partridges came out of the woods morning and evening to feed there. Whichever side you walk in the woods the partridge bursts away on whirring wings, jarring the snow from the dry leaves and twigs on high, which comes sifting down in the sunbeams like golden dust, for this brave bird is not to be scared by winter. It is frequently covered up by drifts, and, it is said, "sometimes plunges from on wing into the soft snow, where it remains concealed for a day or two." I used to start them in the open land also, where they had come out of the woods at sunset to "bud" the wild apple trees. They will come regularly every evening to particular trees, where the cunning sportsman lies in wait for them, and the distant orchards next the woods suffer thus not a little. I am glad that the partridge gets fed, at any rate. It is Nature's own bird, which lives on buds and diet-drink.

In dark winter mornings, or in short winter afternoons, I sometimes heard a pack of hounds threading all the woods with hounding cry and yelp, unable to resist the instinct of the chase, and the note of the hunting-horn at intervals, proving that man was in the rear. The woods ring again, and yet no fox bursts forth on to the open level of the pond, nor following pack pursuing their Actæon. And perhaps at evening I see the hunters returning with a single brush trailing from their sleigh for a trophy, seeking their inn. They tell me that if the fox would remain in the bosom of a

frozen earth he would be safe, or if he would run in a straight line away no fox-hound could overtake him ; but, having left his pursuers far behind, he stops to rest and listen till they come up, and when he runs he circles round to his old haunts, where the hunters await him. Sometimes, however, he will run upon a wall many rods, and then leap off far to one side, and he appears to know that water will not retain his scent. A hunter told me that he once saw a fox pursued by hounds burst out on to Walden when the ice was covered with shallow puddles, run part way across, and then return to the same shore. Ere long the hounds arrived, but here they lost the scent. Sometimes a pack hunting by themselves would pass my door, and circle round my house, and yelp and hound without regarding me, as if afflicted by a species of madness, so that nothing could divert them from the pursuit. Thus they circle until they fall upon the recent trail of a fox, for a wise hound will forsake everything else for this.

Squirrels and wild mice disputed for my store of nuts. There were scores of pitch-pines around my house, from one to four inches in diameter, which had been gnawed by mice the previous winter,—a Norwegian winter for them, for the snow lay long and deep, and they were obliged to mix a large proportion of pine bark with their other diet. These trees were alive and apparently flourishing at midsummer, and many of them had grown a foot, though completely girdled ; but after another winter such were without exception dead. It is remarkable that a single mouse should thus be allowed a whole pine tree for its dinner, gnawing round instead of up and down it ; but perhaps it is necessary in order to thin these trees, which are wont to grow up densely.

The hares (*Lepus Americanus*) were very familiar. One hid her form under my house all winter, separated from me only by the flooring, and she startled me each

morning by her hasty departure when I began to stir,—thump, thump, thump, striking her head against the floor timbers in her hurry. They used to come round my door at dusk to nibble the potato parings which I had thrown out, and were so nearly the colour of the ground that they could hardly be distinguished when still. Sometimes in the twilight I alternately lost and recovered sight of one sitting motionless under my window. When I opened my door in the evening, off they would go with a squeak and a bounce. Near at hand they only excited my pity. One evening one sat by my door two paces from me, at first trembling with fear, yet unwilling to move ; a poor wee thing, lean and bony, with ragged ears and sharp nose, scant tail and slender paws. It looked as if Nature no longer contained the breed of nobler bloods, but stood on her last toes. Its large eyes appeared young and unhealthy, almost dropsical. I took a step, and lo, away it scuds with an elastic spring over the snow crust, straightening its body and its limbs into graceful length, and soon put the forest between me and itself,—the wild free venison, asserting its vigour and the dignity of Nature. Not without reason was its slenderness. Such then was its nature. (*Lepus, livipes*, light-foot, some think.)

What is a country without rabbits and partridges ? They are among the most simple and indigenous animal products ; ancient and venerable families known to antiquity as to modern times ; of the very hue and substance of Nature, nearest allied to leaves and to the ground,—and to one another ; it is either winged or it is legged. It is hardly as if you had seen a wild creature when a rabbit or a partridge bursts away, only a natural one, as much to be expected as rustling leaves. The partridge and the rabbit are still sure to thrive, like true natives of the soil, whatever revolutions occur. If the forest is cut off, the sprouts and bushes which spring up afford them concealment, and they become

more numerous than ever. That must be a poor country indeed that does not support a hare. Our woods teem with them both, and around every swamp may be seen the partridge or rabbit walk, beset with twiggy fences and horse-hair snares, which some cow-boy tends.

R. D. BLACKMORE

[The following extracts are taken from R. D. Blackmore's novel, *Lorna Doone*. The story itself relates the strange adventures of John Ridd, a seventeenth-century Exmoor farmer, and Lorna Doone, the captive of a band of outlaws. But the beauty and wonder of the countryside, which John Ridd pictures so lovingly, is as much a part of England in the twentieth century as in the seventeenth; and if the manner of celebrating Harvest, as it is set forth below, is a fashion that has passed, the glory and the wonder of Harvest itself remains, a yearly manifestation of the power of Him who has said that so long as the earth endureth Seed-time and Harvest shall not cease.]

CATCHING LOACHES

WHEN I was turned fourteen years old, and put into good small-clothes, buckled at the knee, and strong blue worsted hosen, knitted by my mother, it happened to me to explore the Bagworthy water. And it came about in this wise.

My mother had long been ailing, and not able to eat much; and there is nothing that frightens us so much as for people to have no love of their victuals. Now I chanced to remember, that once at the time of the holidays, I had brought dear mother from Tiverton a jar of pickled loaches, caught by myself in the Lowman river, and baked in the kitchen oven, with vinegar, a few leaves of bay, and about a dozen peppercorns. And

mother had said that in all her life she had never tasted anything fit to be compared with them. Whether she said so good a thing out of compliment to my skill in catching the fish and cooking them, or whether she really meant it, is more than I can tell, though I quite believe the latter, and so would most people who tasted them ; at any rate, I now resolved to get some loaches for her, and do them in the self-same manner, just to make her eat a bit.

There are many people even now, who have not come to a right knowledge what a loach is, and where he lives, and how to catch and pickle him. And I will not tell them all about it, because if I did, very likely there would be no loaches left, ten or twenty years after the appearance of this book. A pickled minnow is very good, if you catch him in a stickle, with the scarlet fingers upon him ; but I count him no more than the ropes in beer, compared with a loach done properly.

Being resolved to catch some loaches, whatever trouble it cost me, I set forth without a word to any one, in the forenoon of St. Valentine's Day, 1675-6, I think it must have been. Annie should not come with me, because the water was too cold ; for the winter had been long, and snow lay here and there, in patches in the hollows of the banks, like a lady's gloves forgotten. And yet the spring was breaking forth, as it always does in Devonshire, when the turn of the days is over ; and though there was little to see of it, the air was full of feeling.

It puzzles me now that I remember all these young impressions, because I took no heed of them at the time whatever ; and yet they come upon me bright, when nothing else is evident in the grey fog of experience. I am like an old man gazing at the outside of his spectacles, and seeing, as he rubs the dust, the image of his grandson playing at bo-peep with him.

But let me be of any age, I never could forget the day, and how bitter cold the water was. For I doffed

my shoes and hose and put them in a bag about my neck ; and left my little coat at home, and tied my shirt-sleeves back to my shoulders. Then I took a three-pronged fork, firmly bound to a rod with cord, and a piece of canvas kerchief with a lump of bread inside it ; and so went into the pebbly water, trying to think how warm it was. For more than a mile down the Lynn stream, scarce a stone I left unturned, being thoroughly skilled in the tricks of the loach, and knowing how he hides himself. For being grey-spotted, and clear to see through, and something like a cuttle-fish, only more substantial, he will stay quite still, where a streak of weed is in the rapid water, hoping to be overlooked, nor caring even to wag his tail. Then being disturbed he flips away, like whalebone from the finger, and hies to a shelf of stone, and lies with his sharp head poked in under it ; or sometimes he bellies him into the mud and only shows his back-ridge. And that is the time to spear him nicely, holding the fork very gingerly, and allowing for the bent of it, which comes to pass, I know not how, at the tickle of the air and water.

Or if your loach should not be abroad when first you come to look for him, but keeping snug in his little home, then you may see him come forth amazed at the quivering of the shingles, and oar himself and look at you, and then dart upstream like a little grey streak ; and then you must try to mark him in, and follow very daintily. So after that, in a sandy place, you steal up behind his tail to him, so that he cannot set eyes on you, for his head is upstream always, and there you see him abiding still, clear, and mild, and affable. Then, as he looks so innocent, you make full sure to prog him well, in spite of the wry of the water, and the sun making elbows to everything, and the trembling of your fingers. But when you gird at him lovingly, and have as good as gotten him, lo ! in the go-by of the river he is gone as a shadow goes, and only a little

cloud of mud curls away from the prong he should have been on.

A long way down that limpid water, chill and bright as an iceberg, went my little self that day, on man's choice errand—destruction. All the young fish seemed to know that I was one who had taken out God's certificate, and meant to have the value of it; every one of them was aware that we desolate more than replenish the earth. For a cow might come and look into the water, and put her yellow lips down; a kingfisher, like a blue arrow, might shoot through the dark alleys over the channel, or sit on a dipping withy-bough, with his beak sunk into his breast-feathers; even an otter might float downstream, likening himself to a log of wood, with his flat head flush with the water top, and his oily eyes peering quietly; and yet no panic would seize other life, as it does when a sample of man comes.

Now let not any one suppose that I thought of these things when I was young, for I knew not the way to do it. And proud enough in truth I was, at the universal fear I spread in all those lonely places, where I myself must have been afraid, if anything had come up to me. It is all very pretty to see the trees, big with the hopes of another year, though dumb as yet on the subject, and the waters murmuring gaiety, and the banks spread out with comfort; but a boy takes none of this to heart, unless he be meant for a poet (which no man ever can charge on me), and he would liefer have a good apple, or even a bad one, if he stole it.

When I had travelled two miles or so, conquered now and then with cold, and coming out to rub my legs into a lively friction, and only fishing here and there because of the tumbling water; suddenly, in an open space, where meadows spread about it, I found a good stream flowing softly into the body of our brook. And it brought, so far as I could guess by the sweep of it under my knee-caps, a larger power of clear water

than the Lynn itself had ; only it came more quietly down, not being troubled with stairs and steps, as the fortune of the Lynn is, but gliding smoothly and forcibly, as if upon some set purpose.

Hereupon I drew up, and thought, and reason was much inside me ; because the water was bitter cold, and my little toes were aching. So on the bank I rubbed them well with a sprout of young sting-nettle, and having skipped about awhile, was kindly inclined to eat a bit.

Now all the turn of my life hung upon that moment. But as I sat there munching a crust of Betty Muxworthy's sweet brown bread, and a bit of cold bacon along with it, and kicking my little red heels against the dry loam to keep them warm, I knew no more than fish under the fork, what was going on over me. It seemed a sad business to go back now, and tell Annie there were no loaches ; and yet it was a frightful thing, knowing what I did of it, to venture, where no grown man durst, up the Bagworthy water. And please to recollect that I was only a boy in those days, fond enough of anything new, but not like a man to meet it.

However, as I ate more and more, my spirit arose within me, and I thought of what my father had been, and how he had told me a hundred times, never to be a coward. And then I grew warm, and my little heart was ashamed of its pit-a-patting, and I said to myself, "Now if father looks, he shall see that I obey him." So I put the bag round my neck again, and buckled my breeches far up from the knee, expecting deeper water, and crossing the Lynn, went stoutly up under the branches which hang so dark on the Bagworthy river.

I found it strongly over-woven, turned, and torn with thicket-wood, but not so rocky as the Lynn, and more inclined to go evenly. There were bars of chafed stakes stretched from the sides half-way across the current, and light outriders of pithy weed, and blades

of last year's water-grass trembling in the quiet places, like a spider's threads, on the transparent stillness, with a tint of olive moving it ; and here and there the sun came in, as if his light were sifted, making dance upon the waves, and shadowing the pebbles.

Here, although affrighted often by the deep, dark places, and feeling that every step I took might never be taken backward, on the whole I had very comely sport of loaches, trout, and minnows, forking some, and tickling some, and driving others to shallow nooks, whence I could bail them ashore. Now, if you have ever been fishing, you will not wonder that I was led on, forgetting all about danger, and taking no heed of the time, but shouting in a childish way, whenever I caught a " whacker " (as we called a big fish at Tiverton) ; and in sooth there were very fine loaches here, having more lie and harbourage than in the rough Lynn stream, though not quite so large as in the Lowman, where I have even taken them to the weight of a quarter of a pound.

THE EAST WIND

Now the climate of this country is—so far as I can make of it—to throw no man into extremes ; and if he throw himself so far, to pluck him back, by change of weather and the need of looking after things. Lest we should be like the Southerners, for whom the sky does everything, and men sit under a wall, and watch both food and fruit come beckoning. Their sky is a mother to them ; but ours a good stepmother to us—fearing to hurt by indulgence, and knowing that force, and change of mood, are wholesome.

The spring being now too forward, a check to it was needful ; and in the early part of March, there came a change of weather. All the young growth was arrested by a dry wind from the east, which made both face and fingers burn, when a man was doing ditching.

The lilacs and the chestnut trees, just crowding forth in little tufts, close kernelling their blossoms, were ruffled back, like a sleeve turned up, and nicked with brown at the corners. In the hedges any man, unless his eyes were very dull, could see the mischief doing. The russet of the young elm-bloom was fain to be in its scale again ; but having pushed forth, there must be, and turn to a tawny colour. The hangers of the hazel, too, having shed their dust to make the nuts, did not spread their little combs and dry them, as they ought to do ; but shrivelled at the base, and fell, as if a knife had cut them. And more than all to notice was (at least about the hedges) the shuddering of everything, and the shivering sound among them towards the feeble sun ; such as we make to a poor fireplace, when windows and doors are open. Sometimes, I put my face to warm against the soft, rough maple-stem, which feels like the foot of a red deer ; but the pitiless east wind came through all, and took and shook the caved hedge aback, till its knees were knocking together, and nothing could be shelter. Then would any one, having blood, and trying to keep at home with it, run to a sturdy tree, and hope to eat his food behind it, and look for a little sun to come, and warm his feet in the shelter. And if it did, he might strike his breast, and try to think he was warmer.

But when a man came home at night, after a long day's labour, knowing that the days increased, and so his care should multiply ; still he found enough of light, to show him what the day had done against him in the garden. Every ridge of new-turned earth looked like a broken cob-wall, honeycombed, and harsh and crusty, void of spring, and cankerous. Every plant, that had rejoiced in passing such a winter, now was cowering, turned away, unfit to meet the consequence. Flowing sap had stopped its course ; fluted lines showed want of food ; and if you pinched the topmost spray, there was no rebound or firmness.

We think a good deal, in a quiet way, when people ask us about them,—of some fine up-standing pear-trees, grafted by my grandfather, who had been very greatly respected. And he got those grafts by sheltering a poor Italian soldier, in the time of James the First, a man who never could do enough to show his grateful memories. How he came to our place is a very difficult story, which I never understood rightly, having heard it from my mother. At any rate, there the pear-trees were, and there they are to this very day; and I wish every one could taste their fruit, old as they are, and rugged.

Now these fine trees had taken advantage of the west wind, and the moisture, and the promise of fine spring-time, so as to fill the tips of their spray-wood and rowels all up the branches, with a crowd of eager blossom. Not that they were yet in bloom, nor even showing whiteness; only that some of the cones were opening, at the side of the cap which pinched them; and there you might count, perhaps, a dozen nobbs, like very little buttons, but grooved, and lined, and huddling close, to make room for one another. And among these buds were grey-green blades, scarce bigger than a hair almost, yet curving so as if their purpose was to shield the blossom. Other of the spur-points, standing on the older wood, where the sap was not so eager, had not burst their tunic yet, but were frayed and flaked with light, casting off the husk of brown in three-cornered patches; as I have seen a Scotchman's plaid, or as his leg shows through it. These buds at a distance, looked as if the sky had been raining cream upon them.

Now all this fair delight to the eyes, and good promise to the palate, was marred and baffled by the wind, and cutting of the night-frosts. The opening cones were struck with brown, in between the button buds, and on the scapes that shielded them; while the foot part of the cover hung like rags, peeled back, and

quivering. And there the little stalk of each, which might have been a pear, God willing, had a ring around its base, and sought a chance to drop and die. The others, which had not opened shell, but only prepared to do it, were a little better off, but still very brown and unkid, and shrivelling in doubt of health, and neither peart nor lusty.

SPRING

THE spring was in our valley now ; creeping first for shelter shyly in the pause of the blustering wind. There the lambs came bleating to her, and the orchis lifted up, and the thin dead leaves of clover lay, for the new ones to spring through. Then the stiffest things that sleep, the stubby oak, and the stunted beech, dropped their brown defiance to her, and prepared for a soft reply. While her over-eager children (who had started forth to meet her, through the frost and shower of sleet), catkin'd hazel, gold-gloved withy, youthful elder, and old woodbine, with all the tribe of good hedge-climbers (who must hasten, while haste they may)—was there one of them, that did not claim the merit of coming first ?

There she stayed, and held her revel, as soon as the fear of frost was gone ; all the air was a fount of freshness, and the earth of gladness, and the laughing waters prattled of the kindness of the sun.

But all this made it much harder for us, plying the hoe and harrow, to keep the fields with room upon them for the corn to tiller. The winter wheat was well enough, being sturdy and strong-sided ; but the spring wheat, and the barley and oats, were overrun by ill weeds growing faster. Therefore, as the old saying is,—

“ Farmer, that thy wife may thrive,
Let not burr and burdock wive ;
And if thou wouldst keep thy son,
See that bine and gith have none.”

So we were compelled to go down the field and up it, striking in and out with care when the green blades hung together, so that each had space to move in, and to spread its roots abroad. And I do assure you now, though you may not believe me, it was harder work to keep John Fry, Bill Dadds, and Jem Slocomb all in a line, and all moving nimbly to the tune of my own tool, than it was to set out in the morning alone, and hoe half an acre by dinner-time. For, instead of keeping the good ash moving, they would for ever be finding something to look at, or to speak of, or at any rate, to stop with ; blaming the shape of their tools perhaps, or talking about other people's affairs ; or what was most irksome of all to me, taking advantage as married men, and whispering jokes of no excellence, about my having, or having not, or being ashamed of a sweetheart. And this went so far at last, that I was forced to take two of them, and knock their heads together ; after which they worked with a better will.

A SUMMER MORNING

BUT though I may have been none the wiser by reason of my stay in London, at any rate I was much the better in virtue of coming home again. For now I had learned the joy of quiet, and the gratitude for good things round us, and the love we owe to others (even those who must be kind), for their indulgence to us. All this, before my journey, had been too much as a matter of course to me ; but having missed it now I knew that it was a gift, and might be lost. Moreover, I had pined so much, in the dust and heat of that great town, for trees, and fields, and running waters, and the sounds of country life, and the air of country winds, that never more could I grow weary of those soft enjoyments ; or at least I thought so then.

To awake as the summer sun came slanting over the

hill-tops, with hope on every beam adance to the laughter of the morning ; to see the leaves across the window ruffling on the fresh new air, and the tendrils of the powdery vine turning from their beaded sleep. Then the lustrous meadows far beyond the thatch of the garden wall, yet seen beneath the hanging scollops of the walnut tree, all awaking, dressed in pearl, all amazed at their own glistening, like a maid at her own ideas. Down them troop the lowing kine, walking each with a step of character (even as men and women do), yet all alike with toss of horns, and spread of udders ready. From them, without a word, we turn to the farmyard proper, seen on the right, and dryly strawed from the petty rush of the pitch-paved runnel. Round it stand the snug outbuildings, barn, corn-chamber, cider-press, stables, with a blinker'd horse in every doorway munching, while his driver tightens buckles, whistles and looks down the lane, dallying to begin his labour till the milkmaids be gone by. Here the cock comes forth at last ;—where has he been lingering ? he claps his wings and shouts “cock-a-doodle.” But while the cock is crowing still, and the pullet world admiring him, who comes up but the old turkey-cock with all his family round him. Then the geese at the lower end begin to thrust their breasts out, and mum their down-bits, and look at the gander, and scream shrill joy for the conflict ; while the ducks in pond show nothing but tail, in proof of their strict neutrality.

While yet we dread for the coming event, and the fight which would jar on the morning, behold the grandmother of sows, gruffly grunting, right and left, with muzzle which no ring can tame (not being matrimonial), hulks across between the two, moving all each side at once, and then all of the other side, as if she were chined down the middle, and afraid of spilling the salt from her. As this mighty view of lard hides each combatant from the other, gladly each retires,

and boasts how he would have slain his neighbour, but that old sow drove the other away, and no wonder he was afraid of her, after all the chicks she has eaten.

And so it goes on ; and so the sun comes, stronger from his drink of dew ; and the cattle in the byres, and the horses from the stable, and the men from the cottage-door, each has had his rest and food, all smell alike of hay and straw, and every one must hie to work, be it drag, or draw, or delve.

HARVEST

THEN the golden harvest came, waving on the broad hillside, and nestling in the quiet nooks scooped from out the fringe of wood. A wealth of harvest, such as never gladdened all our country-side since my father ceased to reap, and his sickle hung to rust. There had not been a man on Exmoor fit to work that reaping-hook, since the time its owner fell, in the prime of life and strength, before a sterner reaper. But now I took it from the wall, where mother proudly stored it, while she watched me, hardly knowing whether she should smile or cry. All the parish was assembled in our upper courtyard ; for we were to open the harvest that year, as had been settled with Farmer Nicholas, and with Jasper Kebby, who held the third or little farm. We started in proper order, therefore, as our practice is : first, the parson, Josiah Bowden, wearing his gown and cassock, with the parish Bible in his hand, and a sickle strapped behind him. As he strode along well and stoutly, being a man of substance, all our family came next, I leading mother with one hand, in the other bearing my father's hook, and with a loaf of our own bread and a keg of cider upon my back. Behind us Annie and Lizzie walked, wearing wreaths of cornflowers, set out very prettily, such as mother would have worn, if she had been a farmer's wife, in-

stead of a farmer's widow. Being as she was, she had no adornment, except that her widow's hood was off, and her hair allowed to flow, as if she had been a maiden ; and very rich bright hair it was, in spite of all her troubles.

After us, the maidens came, milkmaids and the rest of them, with Betty Muxworthy at their head, scolding even now, because they would not walk fitly. But they only laughed at her ; and she knew it was no good to scold, with all the men behind them.

Then the Snowes came trooping forward ; Farmer Nicholas in the middle, walking as if he would rather walk to a wheatfield of his own, yet content to follow lead, because he knew himself the leader ; and signing every now and then to the people here and there, as if I were nobody. But to see his three great daughters, strong and handsome wenches, making upon either side, as if somebody would run off with them—this was the very thing that taught me how to value Lorna, and her pure simplicity. After the Snowes, came Jasper Kebby, with his wife new-married ; and a very honest pair they were, upon only a hundred acres, and a right of common. After these the men came hotly, without decent order, trying to spy the girls in front, and make good jokes about them, at which their wives laughed heartily, being jealous when alone perhaps. And after these men and their wives came all the children toddling, picking flowers by the way, and chattering and asking questions, as the children will. There must have been threescore of us, take one with another, and the lane was full of people. When we were come to the big field-gate, where the first sickle was to be, Parson Bowden heaved up the rail with the sleeves of his gown done green with it ; and he said that everybody might hear him, though his breath was short, " In the name of the Lord, Amen ! "

" Amen ! So be it ! " cried the clerk, who was far behind, being only a shoemaker.

Then Parson Bowden read some verses from the parish Bible, telling us to lift up our eyes, and look upon the fields already white to harvest ; and then he laid the Bible down on the square head of the gatepost, and despite his gown and cassock, three good swipes he cut of corn, and laid them right end onwards. All this time the rest were huddling outside the gate, and along the lane, not daring to interfere with parson, but whispering how well he did it.

When he had stowed the corn like that, mother entered, leaning on me, and we both said, " Thank the Lord for all His mercies, and these the first fruits of His hand ! " And then the clerk gave out a psalm verse by verse, done very well ; although he sneezed in the midst of it, from a beard of wheat thrust up his nose by the rival cobbler at Brendon. And when the psalm was sung, so strongly that the foxgloves on the bank were shaking, like a chime of bells, at it, parson took a stoop of cider and we all fell to at reaping.

Of course I mean the men, not women ; although I know that up the country, women are allowed to reap ; and right well they reap it, keeping row for row with men, comely, and in due order ; yet, meseems, the men must ill attend to their own reaping-hooks, in fear lest the other cut themselves, being the weaker vessel. But in our part, women do what seems their proper business, following well behind the men, out of harm of the swinging hook, and stooping with their breasts and arms up they catch the swathes of corn, where the reapers cast them, and tucking them together tightly with a wisp laid under them, this they fetch around and twist, with a knee to keep it close ; and lo, there is a goodly sheaf, ready to set up in stooks ! After these the children come, gathering each for his little self, if the farmer be right-minded ; until each hath a bundle made as big as himself and longer, and tumbles now and again with it, in the deeper part of the stubble.

We, the men, kept marching onwards down the

flank of the yellow wall, with knees bent wide, and left arm bowed, and right arm flashing steel. Each man in his several place, keeping down the rig or chine, on the right side of the reaper in front, and the left of the man that followed him; each making further sweep and inroad into the golden breadth and depth, each casting leftwards his rich clearance on his foregoer's double track.

So like half a wedge of wildfowl, to and fro we swept the field; and when to either hedge we came, sickles wanted whetting, and throats required moistening, and backs were in need of easing, and every man had much to say, and women wanted praising. Then all returned to the other end, with reaping hooks beneath our arms, and dogs left to mind jackets.

But now, will you believe me well, or will you only laugh at me? For even in the world of wheat, when deep among the garnished crispness of the jointed stalks, and below the feathered yielding of the graceful heads, even as I gripped the swathes and swept the sickle round them, even as I flung them by to rest on brother stubble, through the whirling yellow world, and eagerness of reaping, came the vision of my love, as with downcast eyes she wondered at my power of passion. And then the sweet remembrance glowed, brighter than the sun through wheat, through my very depth of heart, of how she raised those beaming eyes, and ripened in my breast rich hope. Even now I could descry, like high waves in the distance, the rounded heads and folded shadows of the wood of Bagworthy. Perhaps she was walking in the valley, and softly gazing up at them. Oh, to be a bird just there! I could see a bright mist hanging just above the Doone Glen. Perhaps it was shedding its drizzle upon her. Oh, to be a drop of rain! The very breeze which bowed the harvest to my bosom gently, might have come direct from Lorna, with her sweet voice laden. Ah, the flaws of air that wander where they will around

her, fan her bright cheek, play with lashes, even revel in her hair and reveal her beauties—man is but a breath, we know, would I were such breath as that !

But confound it, while I ponder, with delicious dreams suspended, with my right arm hanging frustrate and the giant sickle drooped, with my left arm bowed for clasping something more germane than wheat, and my eyes not minding business, but intent on distant woods—confound it, what are the men about, and why am I left vapouring ? They have taken advantage of me, the rogues ! They are gone to the hedge for the cider-jars ; they have had up the sledd of bread and meat, quite softly over the stubble, and if I can believe my eyes (so dazed with Lorna's image), they are sitting down to an excellent dinner before the church clock has gone eleven !

" John Fry, you big villain ! " I cried, with John hanging up in the air by the scruff of his neck-cloth, but holding still by his knife and fork, and a goose-leg in between his lips, " John Fry, what mean you by this, sir ? "

" Latt me dowun, or I can't tell 'e," John answered, with some difficulty. So I let him come down, and I must confess that he had reason on his side. " Please your worship "—John called me so ever since I returned from London, firmly believing that the King had made me a magistrate at least ; though I was to keep it secret—" us zeed as how your worship were took with thinkin' of King's business, in the middle of the whate-rigg ; and so us zed, ' Latt un coom to his zell, us had better save taim, by takking our dinner ; ' and here us be, please your worship, and hopps no offence with thic iron spoon full of vried taties."

I was glad enough to accept the ladle full of fried batatas, and to make the best of things, which is generally done by letting men have their own way. Therefore I managed to dine with them, although it was so early.

For according to all that I can find, in a long life and

a varied one, twelve o'clock is the real time for a man to have his dinner. Then the sun is at his noon, calling halt to look around, and then the plants and leaves are turning, each with a little leisure time, before the work of the afternoon. Then is the balance of east and west, and then the right and left side of a man are in due proportion, and contribute fairly with harmonious fluids. And the health of this mode of life, and its reclaiming virtue are well set forth in our ancient rhyme,—

“ Sunrise, breakfast ; sun high, dinner ;
Sundown, sup ; makes a saint of a sinner.”

Whish, the wheat falls ! Whirl again ; ye have had good dinners ; give your master and mistress plenty to supply another year. And in truth we did reap well and fairly, through the whole of that afternoon, I not only keeping lead, but keeping the men up to it. We got through a matter of ten acres, ere the sun between the shocks, broke his light on wheaten plumes, then hung his red cloak on the clouds, and fell into grey slumber.

Seeing this we wiped our sickles and our breasts and foreheads, and soon were on the homeward road, looking forward to good supper.

Of course all the reapers came at night to the harvest supper, and Parson Bowden to say the grace, as well as to help to carve for us. And some help was needed there, I can well assure you ; for the reapers had brave appetites, and most of their wives having babies were forced to eat as a duty. Neither failed they of this duty ; cut and come again was the order of the evening, as it had been of the day ; and I had no time to ask questions, but help meat and ladle gravy. All the while our darling Annie, with her sleeves tucked up and her comely figure panting, was running about with a bucket of taties mashed with lard and cabbage. Even Lizzie had left her books, and was serving out

beer and cider ; while mother helped plum-pudding largely on pewter plates with the mutton. And all the time Betty Muxworthy was grunting in and out everywhere, not having space to scold even, but changing the dishes, serving the meat, poking the fire, and cooking more. But John Fry would not stir a peg, except with his knife and fork, having all the airs of a visitor, and his wife to keep him eating, till I thought there would be no end of it.

Then having eaten all they could, they prepared themselves with one accord for the business now of drinking. But first they lifted the neck of corn, dressed with ribbons gaily, and set it upon the mantel-piece, each man with his horn a-froth ; and then they sang a song about it, every one shouting in the chorus louder than harvest thunderstorm. Some were in the middle of one verse, and some at the end of the next one ; yet somehow all managed to get together in the mighty roar of the burden. And if any farmer up the country would like to know Exmoor harvest song as sung in my time, and will be sung long after I am garnered home, lo, here I set it down for him, omitting only the dialect, which perchance might puzzle him.

EXMOOR HARVEST-SONG

I

The corn, oh the corn, 'tis the ripening of the corn !
 Go unto the door, my lad, and look beneath the moon,
 Thou canst see, beyond the woodrick, how it is yellow :
 'Tis the harvesting of wheat, and the barley must be
 shorn.

(Chorus)

The corn, oh the corn, and the yellow, mellow corn !
 Here's to the corn, with the cups upon the board !
 We've been reaping all the day, and we'll reap again the
 morn,
 And fetch it home to mow-yard, and then we'll thank
 the Lord.

2

The wheat, oh the wheat, 'tis the ripening of the wheat !
All the day it has been hanging down its heavy head,
Bowing over on our bosoms with a beard of red :
'Tis the harvest, and the value makes the labour sweet.

(Chorus)

The wheat, oh the wheat, and the golden, golden wheat !
Here's to the wheat, with the loaves upon the board !
We've been reaping all the day, and we never will be beat,
But fetch it all to mow-yard, and then we'll thank the
Lord.

3

The barley, oh the barley, and the barley is in prime !
All the day it has been rustling with its bristles brown,
Waiting with its beard abowing, till it can be mown !
'Tis the harvest, and the barley must abide its time.

(Chorus)

The barley, oh the barley, and the barley ruddy brown !
Here's to the barley, with the beer upon the board !
We'll go amowing, soon as ever all the wheat is down ;
When all is in the mow-yard, we'll stop, and thank the
Lord.

4

The oats, oh the oats, 'tis the ripening of the oats !
All the day they have been dancing with their flakes of
white,
Waiting for the girding-hook, to be the nags' delight :
'Tis the harvest, let them dangle in their skirted coats.

(Chorus)

The oats, oh the oats, and the silver, silver oats !
Here's to the oats with the backstone on the board !
We'll go among them, when the barley has been laid in
rotes ;
When all is home to mow-yard, we'll kneel and thank
the Lord.

The corn, oh the corn, and the blessing of the corn !
Come unto the door, my lads, and look beneath the
moon,
We can see, on hill and valley, how it is yelloon,
With a breadth of glory, as when our Lord was born.

(Chorus)

The corn, oh the corn, and the yellow, mellow corn !
Thanks for the corn, with our bread upon the board !
So shall we acknowledge it, before we reap the morn,
With our hands to heaven, and our knees unto the Lord.

Now we sang this song very well the first time, having the parish choir to lead us, and the clarionet, and the parson to give us the time with his cup ; and we sang it again the second time, not so but what you might praise it (if you had been with us all the evening), although the parson was gone then, and the clerk not fit to compare with him in the matter of keeping time. But when that song was in its third singing, I defy any man (however sober) to have made out one verse from the other, or even the burden from the verses, inasmuch as every man present, ay, and woman too, sang as became convenient to them, in utterance both of words and tune.

And in truth there was much excuse for them ; because it was a noble harvest, fit to thank the Lord for, without His thinking us hypocrites. For we had more land in wheat that year than ever we had before, and twice the crop to the acre ; and I could not help now and then remembering, in the midst of the merriment, how my father in the churchyard yonder would have gloried to behold it.

T. E. BROWN

[Thomas Edward Brown was born in the Isle of Man, and after a long course of teaching at Gloucester and Clifton College returned to his beloved island five years before his death. With a robust sense of humour Brown combined an intense love for children and for Nature.]

NORTON WOOD

In Norton wood the sun was bright,
In Norton wood the air was light,
And meek anemonies,
Kissed by the April breeze,
Were trembling left and right.
Ah, vigorous year !
Ah, primrose dear,
With smile so arch !
Ah, budding larch !
Ah, hyacinth so blue,
We also must make free with you !
Where are those cowslips hiding ?
But we should not be chiding—
The ground is covered every inch—
What sayest, master finch ?
I see you on the swaying bough !
And very neat you are, I vow !
And Dora says it is " the happiest day ! "
Her birthday—hers !
And there's a jay,
And from that clump of firs
Shoots a great pigeon, purple, blue, and grey.
And, coming home,
Well laden, as we clomb
Sweet Walton hill,
A cuckoo shouted with a will—

THE PLEASANT LAND

"Cuckoo ! cuckoo !" the first we've heard !
 "Cuckoo ! cuckoo !" God bless the bird !
 Scarce time to take his breath,
 And now "Cuckoo !" he saith—
 Cuckoo ! cuckoo ! three cheers !
 And let the welkin ring !
 He has not folded wing
 Since last he saw Algiers.

MILK ! MILK ! MILK !

MILK ! milk ! milk !
 Straight as the Parson's bands,
 Streaming like silk
 Under and over her hands—
 What is Mary scheming ?
 What is Mary dreaming ?

Swish ! swish ! swish !
 Pressing her sweet young brow,
 Smooth as a dish,
 To the side of the sober cow—
 Can she tell no tale then ?
 Nought but milk and pail then ?

Strip ! strip ! strip !
 Far away over the sea
 Comes there a ship,
 The ship of all ships that be ?
 Ah, little fairy !
 Ah, Mary, Mary !

A BOUGH OF MAY

I BENDED unto me a bough of May,
 That I might see and smell :
 It bore it in a sort of way,

It bore it very well.
But, when I let it backward sway,
Then it were hard to tell
With what a toss, with what a swing,
The dainty thing
Resumed its proper level,
And sent me to the devil.
I know it did—you doubt it?
I turned, and saw them whispering about it.

OLD JOHN

OLD JOHN, do you remember how we picked
Potatoes for you in the days of old?
Bright flashed the *grep*,* and with its sharp prong
pricked
The pink-fleshed tubers. We were blithe and bold.
Dear John, what jokes you cracked! what tales you
told!
So garrulous to cheer your "little midges,"
What time the setting sun shot shafts of gold
Athwart the ridges!
And when the season changed, and hay was mown,
You weighed the balance of our emulous powers,
How "Maister" Hugh was strong the ponderous cone
To pitchfork; but to build the fragrant towers
Was none like "Maister Wulliam." Blessed hours!
The empty cart we young ones scaled—glad riders!—
And screamed at beetles exiled from their bowers,
And homeless spiders. . . .

A perfect treasury of rustic lore
You were to me, Old John: how nature thrives
In horse or cow, their points; if less or more
Convex the grunter's spine; the cackling wives

* Grep = fork.

Of Chanticleer how marked ; the bird that dives,
 And he that gobbles reddening—all the crises
 You told, and ventures of their simple lives,
 Also their prices.

VESPERS

O BLACKBIRD, what a boy you are !
 How you do go it !
 Blowing your bugle to that one sweet star—
 How you do blow it !
 And does she hear you, blackbird boy, so far ?
 Or is it wasted breath ?
 “ Good Lord ! she is so bright
 To-night ! ”
 The blackbird saith.

MATILDA BETHAM-EDWARDS

[Miss Betham-Edwards, poet and novelist, has written much of the French countryside as well as of the English. In these extracts from *The Lord of the Harvest* she describes her native county of Suffolk.]

CART-HORSES

... For just upon thirty years Elisha had drawn stretches, and his horses had been regarded as so many comrades. But cart-horses, like human beings, are not all formed after one pattern ; there are degrees of intelligence, docility, and affectionateness. Now, Smiler, in Elisha's eyes, resumed all the excellences of his species, and, having never known any other master, had attached himself to him with dog-like devotion.

“ As true as I stand here,” he would say at ploughing matches, “ that there animal knows as much as

most folks that can speak. I believe that if he had but a tongue he would answer Bible questions before the best scholar of the Sunday school."

But for the capacities of the enormously strong lamb-like creature he should never have won kettle after kettle at the ploughing match. Smiler had an eye for a straight line and turned at the sound of "Come hather," and "Wouree," the ploughman's call to right and left as a soldier at drill. Tim, his yoke-fellow, was an excellent beast, but between Tim and Elisha existed no such understanding and sympathy.

"And Lor' bless you," he had often said over his pot of ale at the "Barley Mow," "though book larnin' hasn't done it, there's as much difference between those two horses as between parson and myself."

THE HARVEST MOON

AMID this sea of pale gold, wave upon wave of ripe barley, bright flower-heads showed here and there, the corn-cockle of deepest carmine, the wild periwinkle, blue as a baby's eye, fiery-red poppies, wild marigold, and purple loosestrife. Smy creeping along the stetches could gather these, but it was the hedgerow that attracted the children.

"That will do for nosegays, now for the green boughs and garlands, Master Smy," they cried.

Obedient to their behest, the little man climbed bank and tree like a squirrel. With shouts of delight, Aimée's pupils pounced upon each treasure as it fell, now a trailing mass of honeysuckle, traveller's joy, and wild rose, now a branch of sycamore, with its pale yellow tassels, now an oak bough showing many an acorn.

If entrancing this task, even more so was that of decorating the last waggon, for all here could lend a helping hand.

Whilst the Lord of the Harvest and his men covered the piled-up corn with greenery and flowers, Aimée and the children garlanded horses and harness. Elisha's favourite, Smiler, must have his necklace of poppies, the rest their floral adornments.

"On my word, a bowery indeed," observed Mr. Flindell, eyeing the waggons.

It was evenfall when the joyous business of preparation began; twilight faded ere it came to an end. Then indescribably beautiful, and only to be faintly suggested, became that rustic scene. The group of harvesters had now considerably swelled. One by one came wives and sweethearts to participate in the jubilation, and add to the general air of festivity. From his perch on the piled-up sheaves Elisha caught sight of Karra's pale, emotional face, Ebenezer of Amma's slim figure. The presence of their womenkind, the only amiable influence they knew, rendered these toilers all the gayer, more expansive. They whistled, sang, shouted, with the self-abandonment of Burgundian vintagers. Troubles and hardships were forgotten, jollity and rollicking fun held sway.

Hitherto the prevailing loveliness had been of subdued hues and mellow sobriety.

Amid pearly tints the sun went down, light clouds just touched with purple and rose soon giving place to soft uniform greyness. For a brief spell cornfield and hedgerow, waggon and harvesters formed part of a neutral landscape, outlined features hardly deeper in tone than their dim surroundings.

But all at once, just as sudden passion transforms a beautiful nature, so was this scene changed, enriched, glorified.

It was the rising—rather, revelation—of the harvest moon; here came no heralding illumination, no preparation rays, as at sunrise. This vesper world, so uniformly grey and quiet the moment before, now seemed afire. From that resplendent orb, trembling

above the horizon, emanated a glory wrapping heaven and earth, and perhaps, although unconsciously, not a soul here but was impressed by the sight. Every year rose the harvest moon, brightest, largest, most irradiating of the year, yet the experience lost not novelty. Folks gazed and admired as if they had never seen it before.

"NEVER NO MORE"

NEXT morning Elisha was up earlier than usual.

"I shan't be in to dinner, master's sendin' me on an errand," was all he said as he left the cottage, then swallowing a little beer and stuffing a chunk of bread and cheese into his pockets, he set off for the stable. To-day Smiler made a spectacle even for urban eyes, that wonderful coat of his shining like burnished copper, the long flaxen plume, not a hair out of place, artistically coiled.

And the animal world has its little vanities no less than the human. Conscious of beauty as strength looked Smiler, thus prepared for no common occasion: so much the sagacious animal divined. For his toilet varied as that of his master's; it was not the same when drawing sketches for Mr. Flindell or before crowds for a prize kettle.

Thus Elisha had tidied but not be-Sundayed himself. His coarse whity-brown shirt was speckless, his corduroys not "seated," *i.e.*, patched in the nether region; over his red waistcoat he wore a linen slop.

The day promised to be one of extraordinary splendour, but at present brilliant heavens were a promise only. Dew lay heavily on bank and hedgerow; like jet gleamed blackberries amid leaves of bespangled vermillion, of frosted silver seemed every spike of wild oats or barley. No Raja's diadem ever scintillated as did wayside fruitage and leaf under the swiftly advancing sun.

From end to end of the level landscape came notes of stock-dove and field-lark, whilst every coppice rang with chirps and pipings, and around every wayside pool flashed kingfishers, wagtail, and yellow-hammer. Rural England of sixty and more years ago yet remained a bird-haunted, bird-beautified land. In lane and spinney folks listened to woodland singers, instead of identifying them in that mausoleum of animal life, the Natural History Museum.

Upon any other occasion, such a journey to Elisha Sage would have been an adventure, holiday of rare and instructive kind, as such to be made the most of. His eye would have remained wide open during each inch of the road; for weeks after, his tongue would have been loosened at home, at bowls and in the ale-house parlour. To-day he coasted meadow and field, hardly glancing around him. Nothing arrested his gaze, neither young stock at grass, pigs acorning on the fallow, pyramidal wheat and barley in wayside stack-yards. With a dejected, almost morose face, he pursued his way, no more pitiable figure under that mellow heaven.

"Halloo, Master Sage, it is you with the horse, is it?" shouted Samuel cheerily, as he caught sight of the pair. "There's nobody handy about just now, but we'll bait him and then you can go indoors and have a bit of wittals yourself."

Unlike his brother, Samuel Flindell was a garrulous man and asked twenty questions whilst the business of stabling Smiler went on. Elisha dawdled and dawdled, but his companion was not to be got rid of. The farmer must talk to somebody, the perpetual sound of his own voice constituting a necessity of existence second only to that of air itself. His listener's capacity was quite a secondary matter.

When at last they left the stable, he said,—

"That horse is turning his head round, he knows

you're leaving him, I'll lay, but he'll be well off here, never fear."

Elisha did not look back, he felt in a dream.

They entered the kitchen, where all was bustle and activity. . . . Elisha munched the appetizing cold beef-pie hardly knowing what he ate, then, having swallowed his ale, rose to go.

"You're very welcome, I'm sure, Master Sage," said Martha as he stammered out his thanks, "and Mr. Samuel left word you were to have a shilling; here it is, my best respects to my brother, and good day to you."

At any other time the windfall of a shilling would have brightened Elisha's stolid countenance. Housewives, who hereabouts always laid out the weekly wages, generally contrived from time to time to allow their husbands a few pence as pocket money. Karra, indeed, boasted that Elisha had ever a piece of silver in his breeches pocket, there to remain intact, like the Miss Primroses' guineas. With others, he had his pet luxuries but rarely gratified: a little tobacco, a game of bowls, an occasional half-pint at the "Barley Mow," in such items an extra shilling went far. To-day the biggest gold piece of the realm would have seemed a mere clod.

Pulling his front hair, hat in hand, the countryman's most respectful salute, and nodding to the maids, he went out, stood for a moment as if pondering, then crossed the back-yard leading to neat-house and stable.

Just at this hour the farm-yard was silent, the ploughmen were afield, Mr. Samuel and his odd hands were busy clamping potatoes in the potato garden, the pigs were acorning on the fallow, only the flail sounded on the barn floor. Elisha was evidently irresolute; should he make at once for the high road or take another look at his favourite, bid him final farewell?

His first impulse was to master the longing and stride off as fast as legs would carry him. And the

consideration for another's feelings was uppermost, that other the mute four-legged companion of years.

Throughout the last troubled hours, indeed, his pity had been rather for Smiler than for himself.

"I know all about it," he mused; "that it must be so and can't be helped, but how should a poor dumb thing understand? How will he feel when the morning comes, and he hears another in the stable? For never no more, never no more, 'twill be mine, Smiler."

Looking cautiously to the right and the left, creeping along like a thief, he now hastened across the farmyard, and unlatching the stable door, entered softly. The gentle creature turned round, then, as if reassured by the sight of his old master, again dipped his head into the well-filled bin.

"He thinks I shall be a-takin' him home later," mused Elisha, and once more hesitated, half turning to go. But no, if he now tore himself away, no good-bye said, Smiler in some dim way would feel tricked, heartlessly abandoned. Better to make him understand the truth, for, reasoned Elisha, folks may prate as they will, some things dumb beasts understand as well as any judge and jury; better then to make him understand that at night a stranger hand would fill his bin, next morning some other voice would summon him to the furrow, that indeed they should see each other "never, never no more." Poor Elisha's piled-up negatives, implying as they did the climax of desolation, again rose to his lips.

He approached the bin and patted the bent down neck: Smiler was evidently relishing his oats to the utmost.

"I'm a-goin' to leave you, Smiler," murmured Elisha, "you'll see me never, never no more."

The voice broke down, and with a loud sob he threw his arms around the animal's neck. Smiler had turned again, and at last too, to his eyes also flashed the anguish of that horse is to. The good horse realized as well

as his master that they were parting, that they should never again belong to each other. No one was by, no need, therefore, for false shame or enforced self-command. Again and again Elisha kissed the broad forehead, wetting it with his sobs. Bitterer tears the Lord of the Harvest had hardly shed by his little Delphie's grave years before, and from those patient yet how expressive eyes, fixed on his own so wistfully, tears now streamed plenteously also. The Suffolk cart-horse wept for sorrow as had done his immortal predecessor of Homeric story.

"No more, never no more!" Elisha murmured, but the sight of Smiler's grief was more than he could bear. With a last inarticulate word of endearment he closed the stable door, as quickly as might be gaining the high road.

THOMAS HARDY

[Thomas Hardy, the great Wessex novelist, was born in Dorsetshire in 1840. In his series of remarkable novels published between 1871 and 1895 he has represented the scenery and the people of his own part of England with an insight and a power beyond description. "Born of the earth . . . he brings the reader into the inmost heart and shrine of Nature." The following extract is the opening chapter of *The Return of the Native*.]

EGDON HEATH

A FACE ON WHICH TIME MAKES BUT LITTLE
IMPRESSION

A SATURDAY afternoon in November was approaching the time of twilight, and the vast tract of unenclosed wild known as Egdon Heath embrowned itself moment by moment. Overhead the hollow stretch of whitish cloud shutting out the sky was as a tent which had the whole heath for its floor.

The heaven being spread with this pallid screen and the earth with the darkest vegetation, their meeting-line at the horizon was clearly marked. In such contrast the heath wore the appearance of an instalment of night which had taken up its place before its astronomical hour was come: darkness had to a great extent arrived hereon, while day stood distinct in the sky. Looking upward, a furze-cutter would have been inclined to continue work; looking down, he would have decided to finish his faggot and go home. The distant rims of the world and of the firmament seemed to be a division in time no less than a division in matter. The face of the heath by its mere complexion added half an hour to evening; it could in like manner retard the dawn, sadden noon, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless night to a cause of shaking and dread.

In fact, precisely at this transitional roll into darkness the great and particular glory of the Egdon waste began, and nobody could be said to understand the heath who had not been there at such a time. It could best be felt when it could not clearly be seen, its complete effects and explanation lying in this and the succeeding hours before the next dawn: then, and then only, did it tell its true tale. The spot was, indeed, a near relation of night, and when night showed itself an apparent tendency to gravitate together could be perceived in its shades and the scene. The sombre stretch of rounds and hollows seemed to rise and meet the evening gloom in pure sympathy, the heath exhaling darkness as rapidly as the heavens precipitated it. And so the obscurity in the air and the obscurity in the land closed together in a black fraternization towards which each advanced half-way.

The place became full of a watchful intentness now; for when other things sank brooding to sleep the heath appeared slowly to awake and listen. Every night its

titanic form seemed to await something ; but it had waited thus, unmoved, during so many centuries, through the crises of so many things, that it could only be imagined to await one last crisis—the final overthrow.

It was a spot which returned upon the memory of those who loved it with an aspect of peculiar and kindly congruity. Smiling champagnes of flowers and fruit hardly do this, for they are permanently harmonious only with an existence of better reputation as to its issues than the present. Twilight combined with the scenery of Egdon Heath to evolve a thing majestic without severity, impressive without showiness, grand in its simplicity. The qualifications which frequently invest the façade of a prison with far more dignity than is found in the façade of a palace double its size lent to this heath a sublimity in which spots renowned for beauty of the accepted kind are utterly wanting. Fair prospects wed happily with fair times ; but, alas, if times be not fair ! Men have oftener suffered from the mockery of a place too smiling for their reason than from the oppression of surroundings oversadly tinged. Haggard Egdon appealed to a subtler and scarcer instinct, to a more recently learnt emotion, than that which responds to the sort of beauty called charming and fair.

The most thoroughgoing ascetic could feel that he had a natural right to wander on Egdon : he was keeping within the line of legitimate indulgence when he laid himself open to such influences as these. Colours and beauties so far subdued were at least the birth-right of all. Only in summer days of highest feather did its mood touch the level of gaiety. Intensity was more usually reached by way of the solemn than by way of the brilliant, and such a sort of intensity was often arrived at during winter darkness, tempests, and mists. Then Egdon was aroused to reciprocity ; for the storm was its lover, and the wind its friend.

Then it became the home of strange phantoms ; and it was found to be the hitherto unrecognized original of those wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster, and are never thought of after the dream till revived by scenes like this.

It was at present a place perfectly accordant with man's nature—neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly ; neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor tame ; but, like man, slighted and enduring ; and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony. As with some persons who have lived long apart, solitude seemed to look out of its countenance. It had a lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities.

This obscure, obsolete, superseded country figures in Domesday. Its condition is recorded therein as that of heathy, furzy, briary wilderness—" Bruaria."

Then follows the length and breadth in leagues ; and though some uncertainty exists as to the exact extent of this ancient lineal measure, it appears from the figures that the area of Egdon down to the present day has but little diminished. " Turbaria Bruaria "—the right of cutting heath-turf—occurs in charters relating to the district " overgrown with heth and mosse," says Leland of the same dark sweep of country.

Here at least were intelligible facts regarding landscape—far-reaching proofs productive of genuine satisfaction. The untamable, Ishmaelitish thing that Egdon now was it always had been. Civilization was its enemy ; and ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress, the natural and invariable garment of the particular formation. In its venerable one coat lay a certain vein of satire on human vanity in clothes. A person on a heath in raiment of modern cut and colours has more or less an anomalous look. We seem to want the oldest and simplest human clothing where the clothing of the earth is so primitive.

To recline on a stump of thorn in the central valley of Egdon, between afternoon and night, as now, where the eye could reach nothing of the world outside the summits and shoulders of heathland which filled the whole circumference of its glance, and to know that everything around and underneath had been from prehistoric times as unaltered as the stars overhead, gave ballast to the mind adrift on change, and harassed by the irrepressible new. The great inviolate place had a permanence which the sea cannot claim. Who can say of a particular sea that it is old? Distilled by the sun, kneaded by the moon, it is renewed in a year, in a day, or in an hour. The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, the people changed, but Egdon remained. Those surfaces were neither so steep as to be destructible by weather, nor so flat as to be the victims of floods and deposits. With the exception of an aged highway, and a still more aged barrow—themselves almost crystallized to natural products by long continuance—even the trifling irregularities were not caused by pickaxe, plough, or spade, but remained as the very finger-touches of the last geological change.

THE PLEASANT LAND

Unmarred, unsoiled
 It cleft the clay,
 Serene, unspoiled
 It views the day.

It is so holy
 And yet so lowly.
 Would you enjoy
 Its grace and dower
 And not destroy
 The living flower ?
 Then you must, please,
 Fall on your knees.

RICHARD JEFFERIES

[Richard Jefferies was born in 1848, in a Wiltshire hamlet called Coate. He was a farmer's son, and throughout his short life displayed the most passionate love for Nature. "He walked about the hills and fields night and day, in pursuit of sport, of health, of society, of solitude, of joy, of the dearest objects of his soul;" and his writings, of which the best known are *Wild Life in a Southern County*, *The Open Air*, *Wood Magic*, *Bevis*, and *Field and Hedgerow*, reveal not only a rare knowledge of the birds, beasts, trees, and flowers of the countryside, but a power of appreciative description such as few writers possess. His writings appear the more remarkable when one remembers that much of his best work was done when he was tortured with bodily pain. He died in 1887.]

ROOKS AND THEIR WAYS

THE city built by the rooks in the elms of the great pasture field (the Warren, near Wick farmhouse) is divided into two main parts, the trees standing in two rows, separated by several hundred yards of sward.

But the inhabitants appear to be all more or less related, for they travel amicably in the same flock and pay the usual visit to the trees at the same hour. Some scattered elms form a line of communication between the chief quarters, and each has one or more nests in it. Besides these, the oaks in the hedge-rows surrounding the field support a few nests, grouped three or four in close neighbourhood. In some trees near the distant ash-copse there are more nests, whose owners probably sprang from the same stock, but were exiled, or migrated, and do not hold much communion with the capital.

In early days men seem to have frequently dug their entrenchments or planted their stockades on the summit of hills. To the rooks their trees are their hills, giving security from enemies. The wooden houses in the two main streets are evidently of greater antiquity than those erected in the outlying settlements. The latter are not large or thick: they are clearly the work of one, or at most two, seasons only; for it is noticeable that when rooks build at a distance from the centre of population they are some time before they finally decide on a site, abandoning one place after another. But the nests forming the principal streets are piled up to a considerable height—fresh twigs being added every year—and are also thick and bulky. The weight of the whole must be a heavy burden to the trees.

Much skill is shown in the selection of the branches upon which the foundations are laid. In the first place the branch must fork sufficiently to hold the bottom twigs firmly and to give some side support. Then it must be a branch more or less vertical, or it would swing with the wind too much up and down, as well as to and fro. Thirdly, there should be a clear or nearly clear space above the nest to give easy access, and to afford room for it to increase in size annually. For this reason, perhaps, nests are generally placed near the top, or on the side, of the tree, where the branch attains its

and every upward extension reaches a clearer place. Fourthly, the bough ought not to be too stiff and firm ; it should yield a little, and sway easily, though only in a small degree, to the breeze. If too stiff, in strong gales the nest runs the risk of being blown clean out of the tree. Fifthly, no other branch must rub against the one bearing the principal weight of the nest, for that would loosen the twigs in time, and dislocate the entire structure. Finally, rooks like an adjacent bough on which the bird not actually engaged in incubation can perch and "caw" to his mate, and which is also useful to alight on when bringing food for the young.

It may be that the difficulty of finding trees which afford all these necessary conditions is one reason why rooks who settle at a distance from their city seem long before they can please themselves. The ingenuity exercised in the selection of the bough and in the placing of the twigs is certainly very remarkable. When the wind blows furiously you may see the nest moving gently, riding on the swaying boughs, while one of the birds perches on a branch close by, and goes up and down like a boat on the waves. Except by the concussion of branches beating hard against the nest, it is rarely broken ; up to a certain point it would seem as if the older nests are the firmest, perhaps because of their weight. Sometimes one which has been blown down in the winter—when the absence of protecting leaves gives the wind more power on them—retains its general form even after striking against branches in its descent and after collision with the earth.

Elms are their favourite trees for building in. Oak and ash are also used, but where there are sufficient elms they seem generally preferred. These trees, as a rule, grow higher than any others ordinarily found in the fields, and are more frequently seen in groups, rows, or avenues, thus giving the rook facilities for placing a number of nests in close neighbourhood. The height

of the elm affords greater safety, and the branches are perhaps better suited for their purpose.

After building in an elm for many years—perhaps ever since the owner can remember—rooks will suddenly desert it. There are the old nests still; but no effort is made to repair them, and no new ones are made. The winds and storms presently loosen the framework, about which no care is now taken, and portions are blown down. Then by-and-by the discovery is made that the tree is rapidly dying. The leaves do not appear, or if they do they wither and turn yellow before midsummer; gradually the branches decay and fall of their own weight or before the wind.

No doubt if any one had carefully examined the tree he would have observed signs of decay long before the rooks abandoned it; but those who pass the same trees day after day for years do not observe minute changes, or, if they do, as Nature is slow in her movements, get so accustomed to the sight of the fungi about the base, and the opening in the bark where the decomposing touchwood shows, as to think that it will always be so. At last the rooks desert it, and then the truth is apparent.

Their nests, being heavy, are not safe on branches up which the strengthening sap no longer rises; and in addition to the nest there is the weight of the sitting bird, and often that of the other who perches temporarily on the edge. As the branches die they become stiff, and will not bend to the gale; this immobility is also dangerous to the nest. So long as the bough yields and sways gently—not much, but still a little—the strong winds do no injury. When the bough becomes rigid, the broad side or wall of the nest offers an unyielding surface, which is accordingly blown away.

The nests which contain young are easily distinguished, despite the height, by the almost continuous cry for food. The labour of feeding the voracious

creatures must be immense, and necessity may partly account for the greater boldness of the old birds at that season. By counting the nests from which the cry proceeds the condition of the rookery is ascertained, and the amount of sport it will afford reckoned with some certainty. By noting the nests from which the cry arose last, it is known which trees to avoid in the rook-shooting; for the young do not all come to maturity at the same time, and there are generally a dozen or so which it is best to leave a week or a fortnight later than the rest.

When the young birds begin to quit the nests, and are observed perching on the tree or fluttering from branch to branch, they must not be left much longer before shooting, or they will wander and be lost. A very few days will then make all the difference; and so it has often happened that men expecting to make a great bag have been quite disappointed, notwithstanding the evident number of nests: the shooting has been held a day or so too late. The young birds get the use of their wings very quickly, and their instinct rather seems to be to wander than to remain in the immediate vicinity of their birthplace. Some think that the old birds endeavour to entice them away as much as possible, knowing what is coming. It may be doubted if that is the case with respect to the very young birds; but when the young ones are capable of something like extended flight, and can cross a field without much difficulty, I think the parents do attempt to lead them away. When the shooting is in progress, if you will go a little distance from the rookery, out of the excitement of the sport, you may sometimes see two old rooks, one on each side of a young one, cawing to it with all their might. The young bird is; perhaps, on the ground, or on a low hedge, and the old birds are evidently endeavouring to get it to move. Yet they have not learned the only way in which that can be done—that is, by starting themselves and flying a

short distance, and waiting, when the young bird will almost invariably follow. If you approach the trio, the two old birds at once take flight, seeing your gun, and the young bird in a few seconds goes after them. Had they the sense to repeat this operation, they might often draw the young one away from danger ; as for their cawing, it does not seem to be quite understood by their offspring, who have hardly yet learned their own language.

To appreciate this effort on the part of the old birds, it must be recollected that immediately after the first shot the great mass of the old rooks fly off in alarm. They go to some distance and then wheel round and come back at an immense height, and there, collected in loose order, circle round and round, cawing as they sail. For an old rook to remain in or near the rookery when once the firing has commenced is the exception, and must be a wonderful effort of moral courage, for of all birds rooks seem most afraid of a gun ; and naturally so, having undergone, when themselves young, a baptism of fire. Those that escape slaughter are for the most part early birds that come to maturity before the majority, and so leave the trees before the date fixed for shooting arrived, or acquire a power of flight sufficient to follow their parents on the first alarm to a safe distance. They have therefore a good opportunity of witnessing the destruction of their cousins, and do not forget the lesson.

Although the young birds upon getting out of the nest under ordinary conditions seem to like to wander, yet if they are driven out or startled by the shot they do not then at once endeavour to make for the open country or to spread abroad, but appear rather to cling to the place, as if the old nests could shelter them. After a while they begin to understand the danger of this proceeding, and half an hour's rapid firing causes the birds to spread about and get into the trees in the hedges at some distance. There, of course, they are

pursued, or killed the next day, three-quarters of a mile or more away from home. It is rare for old rooks to get shot, for the reason above stated ; they rise into the air out of reach. Those that are killed are generally such as have lingered in the hope to save a young bird, and are mistaken and shot as young themselves.

Young birds may be easily distinguished by their slow, uncertain flight and general appearance of not knowing exactly where to go or what to do. They are specially easy to pick out if you see them about to perch on a tree. They go at the tree anyhow, crash in among the branches, and rather fall on a perch than choose it. The old bird always enters a tree carefully, as if he did not like to ruffle his feathers, and knew precisely what sort of bough he preferred to settle on. Close to the rookery there is no need to wait to pick out the young birds, because they are all sure to be young birds there ; but, as observed, old birds will linger with young ones at a little distance, and may then be mistaken—as also on the following day, when sportsmen go round to pick up the outsiders, and frequently come on old and young together. The old bird will not sit and let you aim at him perching ; if you shoot him, it must be on the wing. The young bird will sit and let you pick him off with a crossbow, and even if a cartridge singes his wing he will sometimes only hop a yard or two along the boughs.

Though hard hit and shattered with shot, they will cling to the branches convulsively, seeming to hang by the crook of the claw or by muscular contraction even when perfectly dead, till lifted up by a shot fired directly underneath, or till the bough itself is skilfully cut off by a cartridge and both come down together. The young feathers being soft, and the quills not so hard as in older birds, scarcely a rook-shooting ever goes by without some one claiming to have made a tremendous long shot, which is quite possible, as it does not require many pellets or much force behind them.

On dropping a rook, probably at some distance from the rookery, where the men are whose duty it is to collect the slain, beware of carrying the bird ; let him lie, or at most, throw him upon a bramble bush in a conspicuous spot till a boy comes round. Rooks are perfectly infested with vermin, which in a few minutes will pass up their legs on to your hand, and cause an unpleasant irritation, though it is only temporary, for the insects cannot exist long away from the bird.

The young birds are occasionally stolen from the nests, notwithstanding the difficulty of access. Young labourers will climb the trees, though so large that they can scarcely grasp the trunk, and with few branches, and those small for some height—for elms are often stripped up the trunk to make the timber grow straight and free from the great branches called "limbs." Even when the marauder is in the tree he has some difficulty in getting at the nests, which are placed where the boughs diminish in size. Climbing irons used to be sometimes employed for the purpose. As elm trees are so conspicuous, these thieving practices cannot well be carried on while it is light. So the rook-poachers go up the trees in the dead of night ; and as the old rooks would make a tremendous noise and so attract attention, they carry a lantern with them, the light from which silences the birds. So long as they can see a light they will not caw.

The time selected to rob a rookery is generally just before the date fixed for the shooting, because the young birds are of little use for cooking till ready to fly. The trick, it is believed, has often been played, for the mere pleasure of spiting the owner, the very night previous to the rook-shooting party being chosen. These robberies of young rooks are much less frequent than they used to be. One reason why those who possess any property in the country do not like to see the labouring man with a gun is because he will shoot

an old rook (and often eat it), if he gets the opportunity, without reference to times or seasons, whether they are building or not.

The young rooks that escape being shot seem to be fed, or partly fed, by the old birds for some time after they can fly well and follow their parents. It is easy to know when there are young rooks in a flock feeding in a field. At the first glance the rooks look scattered about, without any order, each independent of the other. But in a few minutes it will be noticed that here and there are groups of three, which keep close together. These are formed of the parents and the young bird—apparently as big and as black as themselves—which they feed now and then. The young bird, by attending to their motions, learns where to find the best food. As late as July trios like this may sometimes be seen.

Besides the young birds that have the good fortune to pass unscathed through the dangers of rook-shooting day, and escape being knocked over afterwards, some few get off on account of having been born earlier than the majority, thus possessing a stronger power of flight. Some nests are known to be more forward than the others; but, although the young birds may be on the point of departing, they are not killed, because the noise of the firing would disturb the whole settlement; so that it becomes the rook's interest to incubate a little in advance of the rest.

After a few months they are put into another terrible fright—on the 1st of September. Guns are going off in all directions, no matter where they turn, so that they find it impossible to feel at ease, and instead of feeding wheel about in the air, or settle on the trees.

The glossy plumage of the rook will sometimes, when seen at a certain angle, reflect the sun's rays in such a manner that instead of looking black the bird appears clothed in shining light—it is as if the feathers were polished like a mirror. In feeding they work in a grave,

steady way—a contrast to the restless starlings who so often accompany them. They do not put a sentinel in a tree to give warning of the approach of an enemy. The whole flock is generally on the ground together, and if half a dozen perch awhile on the trees they soon descend. So far are they from setting a watch, that if you pass up outside the hedge to the leeward, on any side except where the wind would carry the noise of footsteps to them, it is easy to get close—sometimes if they are feeding near the hedge, within three or four yards. Of course, if a rook happens to be in a tree it will not be possible to do so; but they do not set a sentinel for this purpose.

Rooks, in a general way, seem more at their ease in the meadows than in the arable fields. In the latter they are constantly fired at, if only with blank charges, to alarm them from the seed, besides being shouted at, and frightened with clappers. The bird-keeper's efforts are, however, of very little avail. If he puts the flock up on one side of the field they lazily sail to a distant corner, and, when he gets there, go back again. They are fully aware that he cannot injure them if they keep a certain distance; but this perpetual driving to and fro makes them suspicious. In the meadows it is rare for them to be shot at, and they are consequently much less timid.

At the same time, they can perfectly well distinguish a gun from a walking-stick. If you enter a meadow with a gun under your arm, and find a flock feeding, they immediately cease searching for food, and keep a strict watch on your movements; and if you approach they are off directly. If you carry a walking-stick only, you may pass within thirty yards sometimes, and they take little notice, provided you use the stick in the proper way. But now lift it, and point it at the nearest rook, and in an instant he is up with a "caw" of alarm—though he knows it is not a gun—and flies just above the surface of the g.

he considers himself safe from possibility of danger. Often the whole flock will move before that gesture. It is noticeable that no wild creatures, birds or animals, like anything pointed at them ; you may swing your stick freely, but point it, and off goes the finch that showed no previous alarm. So, too, dogs do not seem easy if a stick is pointed at them.

Rooks are easily approached in the autumn, when gorging the acorns. They may often be seen flying carrying an acorn in the bill. Sometimes a flock will set to work and tear up the grass by the roots over a wide space—perhaps nearly half an acre—in search of a favourite beetle. The grass is pulled up in little wisps, just about as much as they can hold in their beaks at a time. In spring they make tracks through the mowing grass—not in all the meadows, but only in one here and there, where they find the food they prefer. These tracks are very numerous, and do the grass some damage. Besides following the furrows made by the plough, and destroying grubs, beetles, wireworm, and other pests in incalculable numbers, they seem to find a quantity of insect food in unripe corn ; for they often frequent wheatfields only just turning yellow, and where the grain is not yet developed. Except perhaps where they are very numerous, they do much more good than harm.

Rooks may now and then be seen in the autumn on the hayricks ; they pull the thatch out, and will do in this way an injury to the roof. Therefore old black bottles are often placed on the thatch in order to scare them. It is said that they pull out the straw for the stray grains left in the ear by the thrashing machine. This seems doubtful. It appears more probable that some insect found on the straw attracts them.

If you are walking past a feeding flock, the nearest rook to you will often exhibit a ridiculous indecision as to whether he shall fly or not. He stretches his neck and leans forward as if about to spring, stops,

utters a questioning "Cawk?" then watches you a moment, and gives a hop, just opens his wings, shuts them, and descends within a couple of feet. "Cawk!" again. Finally, if you turn from your course and make a step towards him, he rises, flaps his wings three or four times, extends them, and glides a dozen yards to alight once more.

Sometimes a flock will rise in the air, and silently wheel round and round after each other, gradually ascending and drifting slowly with the current till they reach a great height. When they soar like this it is said to foretell fine weather. At another time a flock will go up and wheel about in the strangest irregular manner. Every now and then one will extend his wings, holding them rigid, and dive downwards, in his headlong descent wavering to and fro like a sheet of paper falling edge first. He falls at a great pace, and looks as if he must be dashed to pieces against a tree or the earth; but he rights himself at the last moment, and glides away and up again with ease. Occasionally two or three rooks may be seen doing this at once, while the rest whirl about as if possessed, and those that are diving utter a gurgling sound like the usual cawk prolonged—"caw-wouk." These antics are believed to foretell rough winds.

The rook, like other broad-winged birds, often makes much leeway in flying, though there be only a moderate wind. The beak points in one direction, in which the bird is apparently proceeding, but if observed closely it will be found that the real course is somewhat sideways. He is making leeway. So it is that a rook which looks as if coming straight towards you—as if he must inevitably go overhead—passes some distance to one side. He appears slow on the wing, as if to go fast required more energy than he possessed, yet he travels over great distances without the least apparent exertion.

When going with the wind he sails high up in the

air, only flapping his wings sufficiently to maintain balance and steering power. But when working against the wind, if it is a strong gale, his wings are used rapidly, and he comes down near the surface of the ground. He then flies just above the grass, only high enough to escape touching it, and follows the contour of the field. At the hedges he has to rise, and immediately meets the full force of the breeze. It is so powerful sometimes that he cannot overcome it, and his efforts simply lift him in the air, like a kite drawn against the wind. For a few moments he appears stationary, his own impetus and the contending wind balancing each other, and holding him suspended. Then he rises again, but still finding the current too strong, tacks like a ship to port or starboard, and so works aslant into the gale. Shortly afterwards he comes down again, if the field be a large one, and glides forward in the same manner as before, close to the surface. In crossing the lake, too, against the wind, he flies within a few feet of the water.

During such a gale a rook may often be seen struggling to get over a row of trees, and stationary, though using his wings vigorously, suspended a little way above the topmost branches. Frequently he has to give up the attempt, turn back, and make a detour.

Though rooks usually go in flocks, individuals sometimes get separated, and may be seen flying alone on the way to rejoin their friends. A flock of rooks, on rising, occasionally divides into two or more parties. Each section wheels off on its own course, while sometimes a small number of those who chance to be near the centre of the original formation seem at a loss which company to follow, and settle down again on the field. So a dozen or more become separated from the crowd, and presently, when they rise, they too divide; three or four fly one way to join one section, and others take another route. Individuals thus find themselves alone; but that causes them no uneasiness, as they

have their well-known places of rendezvous, and have only to fly to certain fields to be sure of meeting their friends, or at most to wait about near the nesting-trees till the rest come.

It must not, therefore, be supposed that every one flying alone is a crow. Crows are scarce in comparison with rooks. In severe weather a rook will sometimes venture into the courtyard of the farmstead.

Two rooks marked with white resided at the rookery here for several years. One had sufficient white to be distinguished at a distance ; the other seemed to have but one or two feathers, which were, however, visible enough when near the bird. As they have not been seen lately, they have probably been shot by some one who thought it clever to destroy anything out of the ordinary. Most large rookeries can either show a rook with white feathers, or have well-authenticated records of their former existence ; but though not rare, people naturally like to preserve them when they do occur, and it is extremely annoying to have them wantonly killed.

As evening approaches, and the rooks begin to wing their way homewards, sometimes a great number of them will alight upon the steep ascent close under the entrenchment on the downs which has been described, and from whence the wood and beech trees where they sleep can be seen. They do not seem so much in search of food, of which probably there is not a great deal to be found in the short, dried-up herbage and hard soil, as to rest here, half-way home from the arable fields. Sometimes they wheel and circle in fantastic flight over the very brow of the down, just above the rampart ; occasionally, in the raw, cold days of winter, they perch, moping in disconsolate mood, upon the bare branches of the clumps of trees on the ridge. After the nesting time is over and they have got back to their old habits—which during that period are quite reversed—it is a sight to see from hence the long black

stream in the air steadily flowing onwards to the wood below. They stretch from here to the roosting-trees, fully a mile and a half—literally as the crow flies ; and backwards in the opposite direction the line reaches as far as the eye can see. It is safe to estimate that the aerial army's line of march extends over quite five miles in one unbroken corps. The breadth they occupy in the atmosphere varies—now twenty yards, now fifty, now a hundred, on an average say fifty yards ; but rooks do not fly very close together, like starlings, and the mass, it may be observed, fly on the same plane. Instead of three or four layers one above the other, the greater number pass by at the same height from the ground, side by side on a level, as soldiers would march upon a road—not meaning, of course, an absolute but a relative level. This formation is more apparent from an elevation—as it were, up among them—than from below ; and looking along their line towards the distant wood it is like glancing under a black canopy.

Small outlying parties straggle from the line—now on one side, now on the other ; sometimes a few descend to alight on trees in the meadows, where doubtless their nests were situated in the spring. For it is a habit of theirs, months after the nesting is over, and also before it begins, to pay a flying visit to the trees in the evening, calling *en route* to see that all is well, and to assert possession.

The rustling sound of these thousands upon thousands of wings beating the air with slow, steady stroke can hardly be compared to anything else in its weird oppressiveness, so to say ; it is a little like falling water, but may be best likened, perhaps, to a vast invisible broom sweeping the sky. Every now and then a rook passes with ragged wing—several feathers gone, so that you can see daylight through it ; sometimes the feathers are missing from the centre, leaving a great gap, so that it looks as if the bird had a large

wing on this side and on the other two narrow ones. There is a rough resemblance between these and the torn sails of some of the old windmills which have become dark in colour from long exposure to the weather, and have been rent by the storms of years. Rooks can fly with gaps of astonishing size in their wings, and do not seem much incommoded by the loss—caused, doubtless, by a charge of shot in the rook-shooting, or by the small sharp splinters of flint with which the bird-keepers sometimes load their guns, not being allowed to use shot.

Near their nesting-trees their black feathers may be picked up by dozens in the grass; they beat them out occasionally against the small boughs, and sometimes in fighting. If seen from behind, the wings of the rook, as he spreads them and glides, slowly descending, preparatory to alighting, slightly turn up at the edges like the rim of a hat, but much less curved. From a distance as he flies he appears to preserve a level course, neither rising nor falling; but if observed nearer it will be seen that with every stroke of the wings the body is lifted some inches, and sinks as much immediately afterwards.

As the black multitude floats past overhead with deliberate, easy flight, their trumpeters and buglemen, the jackdaws—two or three to every company—utter their curious chuckle; for the jackdaw is a bird which could not keep silence to save his life, but must talk after his fashion, while his grave, solemn companions move slowly onwards, rarely deigning to caw him a reply. But away yonder at the wood, above the great beech trees, where so vast a congregation is gathered together, there is a mighty uproar and commotion—a seething and bubbling of the crowds, now settling on the branches, now rising in sable clouds, each calling to the other with all his might, the whole population delivering its opinions at once.

It is an assemblage of a hundred republics. We

know how free states indulge in speech with their parliaments and congresses and senates, their public meetings, and so forth : here are a hundred such nations, all with perfect liberty of tongue holding forth unsparingly, and in a language which consists of two or three syllables indefinitely repeated. The din is wonderful—each republic as its forces arrive adding to the noise, and for a long time unable to settle upon their trees, but feeling compelled to wheel around and discourse. In spring each tribe has its special district, its own canton and city, in its own trees away in the meadows. Later on they all meet here in the evening. It is a full hour or more before the orations have all been delivered, and even then small bands rush up into the air still dissatisfied.

This great stream of rooks passing over the hills meets another great stream as it approaches the wood, crossing up from the meadows. From the rampart there may be seen, perhaps a mile and a half away, a dim black line crossing at right angles—converging on the wood, which itself stands on the edge of the tableland from which the steeper downs arise. This second army is every whit as numerous, as lengthy, and as regular in its route as the first.

Every morning, from the beech trees where they have slept, safe at that elevation from all the dangers of the night, there set out these two vast expeditionary corps. Regularly the one flies steadily eastwards over the downs ; as regularly the other flies steadily northwards over the vale and meadows. Doubtless in different country districts their habits in this respect vary ; but here it is always east and always north. If any leave the wood for the south or the west, as probably they do, they go in small bodies, and are quickly lost sight of. The two main divisions sail towards the sunrise and towards the north star.

They preserve their ranks for at least two miles from the wood, and then gradually first one and then

another company falls out, and, wheeling round, descends upon some favourite field, till by degrees, spreading out like a fan, the army melts away. In the evening the various companies, which may by that time have worked far to the right or to the left, gradually move into line. By-and-by the vanguard comes sweeping up, and each regiment rises from the meadow or the hill, and takes its accustomed place in the return journey.

So that, although if you casually observe a flock of rooks in the daytime they seem to wander hither and thither just as fancy leads, or as they are driven by passers-by, in reality they have all their special haunts; they adhere to certain rules, and even act in concert, thousands upon thousands of them at once, as if in obedience to the word of command, and as if aware of the precise moment at which to move. They have their laws, from which there is no deviation; they are handed down unaltered from generation to generation. Tradition, indeed, seems to be their main guide, as it is with savage human tribes. They have their particular feeding grounds; and so you may notice that, comparing ten or a dozen fields, one or two will almost always be found to be frequented by rooks while the rest are vacant. Here, for instance, is a meadow close to a farmstead—what is usually called the home field, from its proximity to a house; here day after day rooks alight and spend hours in it, as much at their ease as the nag or the lambs brought up by hand. Another field, at a distance, which to the human eye appears so much more suitable—being retired, quiet, and apparently quite as full of food—is deserted; they scarcely come near it. The home field itself is not the attraction, because other home fields are not so favoured.

The tenacity with which rooks cling to localities is often illustrated near great cities where buildings have gradually closed in around their favourite haunts.

Yet on the small waste spots covered with cinders and dustheaps, barren and unlovely, the rooks still alight ; and you may see them, when driven up from such places, perching on the telegraph wires over the very steam of the locomotives as they puff into the station.

I think that neither considerations of food, water, and shelter, nor convenience, are always the determining factors in the choice made by birds of the spots they frequent, for I have seen many cases in which all of these were evidently quite put on one side. Birds to ordinary observation seem so unfettered, to live so entirely without rhyme or reason, that it is difficult to convey the idea that the precise contrary is really the case.

Returning to these two great streams of rooks, which pour every evening in converging currents from the north and east upon the wood : why do they do this ? Why not go forth to the west, or to the south, where there are hills and meadows and streams in equal number ? Why not scatter abroad, and return according to individual caprice ? Why, to go still further, do rooks manœuvre in such immense numbers, and crows fly only in pairs ? The simple truth is that birds, like men, have a history. They are unconscious of it, but its accomplished facts affect them still, and shape the course of their existence. Without doubt, if we could trace that history back, there are good and sufficient reasons why rooks prefer to fly, in this particular locality, to the east and to the north. Something may perhaps be learnt by examining the routes along which they fly.

The second division—that which goes northwards, after flying little more than a mile in a straight line—passes over Wick Farm, and disperses gradually in the meadows surrounding and extending far below it. The rooks whose nests are placed in the elms of the Warren belong to this division, and, as their trees are the nearest to the great central roosting-place, they are

the first to quit the line of march in the morning, descending to feed in the fields around their property. On the other hand, in the evening, as the army streams homewards, they are the last to rise and join the returning host.

So that there are often rooks in and about the Warren later in the evening after those whose habitations are farther away have gone by, for, having so short a distance to fly, they put off the movement till the last moment. Before watches became so common a possession, the labouring people used, they say, to note the passage overhead of the rooks in the morning in winter as one of their signs of time, so regular was their appearance; and if the fog hid them, the noise from a thousand black wings and throats could not be missed.

If from the rising ground beyond the Warren, or from the downs beyond that, the glance is allowed to travel slowly over the vale northwards, instead of the innumerable meadows which are really there, it will appear to consist of one vast forest. Of the hamlet not far distant there is nothing visible but the white wall of a cottage, perhaps, shining in the sun, or the pale blue smoke curling upwards. This wooded appearance is caused by timber trees standing in the hedgerows, in the copses at the corners of the meadows, and by groups and detached trees in the middle of the fields.

Many hedges are full of elms, some have rows of oaks; some meadows have trees growing so thickly in all four hedges as to seem surrounded by a timber wall; one or two have a number of ancient spreading oaks dotted about in the field itself, or standing in rows. But there are not nearly so many trees as there used to be. Numerous hedges have been grubbed to make the fields larger.

Within the last thirty years two large falls of timber have taken place, when the elms especially were thrown

wholesale. The old men, however, recall a much greater "throw," as they term it, of timber, which occurred twice as long ago. Then before that they have a tradition that a still earlier "throw" took place, when the timber chiefly went to the dockyards for the building of those wooden walls which held the world at bay. These traditions go back, therefore, some eighty or a hundred years. One field in particular is pointed out where stood a double row or avenue of great oaks leading to nothing but a farmstead of the ordinary sort, of which there is not the slightest record that it ever was anything but a farmhouse. Now, avenues of great oaks are not planted to lead to farmsteads. Besides these, it is said, there were oaks in most of the fields—oaks that have long since disappeared, the prevalent tree being elm.

While all these "throws" of timber have successively taken place, no attempt has been made to fill up the gaps; no planting of acorns, no shielding with rails the young saplings from the ravages of cattle. If a young tree could struggle up, it could; if not, it perished. At the last two "throws," especially, young trees which ought to have been saved were ruthlessly cut down. Yet even now the place is well timbered; so that it is easy to form some idea of the forest-like appearance it must have presented a hundred years ago, when rows of giant oaks led up to that farmhouse door.

Then there are archæological reasons, which it would be out of place to mention, why in very ancient days a forest, in all probability, stood hereabouts. It seems reasonable to suppose that in one way or another the regular flight of the second army of rooks passing down into this district was originally attracted by the trees. Three suggestions arise out of the circumstances.

The wood in which both streams of rooks roost at night stands on the last slope of the downs; behind it to the south extend the hills and the open tilled up-

land plains ; below it northwards are the meadows. It has, therefore, much the appearance of the last surviving remnant of the ancient forest. There has been a wood there time out of mind ; there are references to the woods of the locality dating from the sixteenth century. Now if we suppose (and such seems to have been really the case) the unenclosed woodlands below gradually cleared of trees, thereby doubtless destroying many rookeries, the rooks driven away would naturally take refuge in the wood remaining. There the enclosure protected them, and there the trees, being seldom or never cut down, or if cut down felled with judgment and with a view to future timber, grew to great size and in such large groups as they prefer. But as birds are creatures of habit, their descendants in the fiftieth generation would still revisit the old places in the meadows.

Secondly, although so many successive " throws " of timber thinned out the trees, yet there may still be found more groups and rows of elms and oak in this direction than in any other—that is, a line drawn northwards from the remaining wood passes through a belt of well-timbered country. On either side of this belt there is much less timber ; so that the rooks that desired to build nests beyond the limits of the enclosed wood still found in the old places the best trees for their purpose. Here may be seen far more rookeries than in any other direction. Hardly a farmhouse lying near this belt but has got its rookery, large or small. Once these rookeries were established, an inducement to follow this route would arise in the invariable habit of the birds of visiting their nesting trees even when the actual nesting time is past.

Thirdly, if the inquiry be carried still further back, it is possible that the line taken by the rooks indicates the line of the first clearings in very early days. The clearing away of trees and underwood, by opening the ground and rendering it accessible, must be very

attractive to birds, and rooks are particularly fond of following the plough. Now, although the district is at present chiefly meadow land, numbers of these meadows were originally ploughed fields, of which there is evidence in the surface of the fields themselves, where the regular "lands" and furrows are distinctly visible.

One or all of these suggestions may perhaps account for the course followed by the rooks. In any case it seems natural to look for the reason in the trees. The same idea applies to the other stream of rooks which leaves the wood for the eastward every morning, flying along the downs. In describing the hill district, evidence was given of the existence of woods or forest land upon the downs in the olden time. Detached copses and small woods are still to be found; and it happens that a part of this district, in the line of eastward flight, belonged to a "chase," of which several written notices are extant.

The habits of rooks seem more regular in winter than in summer. In winter the flocks going out in the morning or returning in the evening appear to pass nearly at the same hour day after day. But in summer they often stay about late. This last summer (1878) I noticed a whole flock, some hundreds in number, remaining out till late—till quite dusk—night after night, and always in the same place. It was an arable field, and there they stood close together on the ground, so close that in spots it was difficult to distinguish individuals. They were silent and still, making no apparent attempt at feeding. The only motion I observed was when a few birds arrived and alighted among them. Where they thus crowded together, the earth was literally black.

It was about three-quarters of a mile from their nesting trees, but nesting had been over for more than two months. This particular field had recently been ploughed by steam tackle, and was the only one for a

considerable distance that had been ploughed for some time. There they stood motionless, side by side, as if roosting on the ground ; possibly certain beetles were numerous just there (for it was noticeable that they chose the same part of the field evening after evening), and came crawling up out of the earth at night.

The jackdaws, which—so soon as the rooks pack after nesting and fly in large flocks—are always with them, may be distinguished by their smaller size and the quicker beats of their wings, even when not uttering their well-known cry. Jackdaws will visit the hencoops if not close to the house, and help themselves to the food meant for the fowls. Poultry are often kept in rickyards, a field or two distant from the homestead, and it is then amusing to watch the impudent attempts of the jackdaws at robbery. Four or five will perch on the post and rails, intent on the tempting morsels : sitting with their heads a little on one side and peering over. Suddenly one thinks he sees an opportunity. Down he hops, and takes a peck, but before he has hardly seized it a hen darts across, running at him with beak extended like lance in rest. Instantly he is up on the rail again, and the impetus of the hen's charge carries her right under him.

Then, while her back is turned, down hops a second and helps himself freely. Out rushes another hen, and up goes the jackdaw. A pause ensues for a few minutes : presently a third black rascal dashes right into the midst of the fowls, picks up a morsel, and rises again before they can attack him. The way in which the jackdaw dodges the hens, though alighting among them, and as it were for the moment surrounded, is very clever ; and it is laughable to see the cool impudence with which he perches again on the rail, and looks down demurely, not a whit abashed, on the feathered housewife he has just been doing his best to rob.

SNAKES, FROGS, AND TOADS

THERE are three kinds of snakes, according to the cottage people—namely, water snakes, grass snakes, and black snakes. The first frequent the brooks, ponds, and withy-beds ; the second live in the mounds and hedges, and go out into the grass to find their prey ; the third are so distinguished because of a darker colour. The cottage people should know, as they see so many during the summer ; but they have simply given the same snake a different name because they notice it in different places. The common snake is, in fact, partial to the water, and takes to it readily. It does, however, seem to be correct that some individuals are of a blacker hue than the rest, and so have been supposed to constitute a distinct kind.

These creatures, like every other, have their favourite localities ; and while you may search whole fields in vain, along one single dry sandy bank you may sometimes find half a dozen, and they haunt the same spot year after year. So soon as the violets push up and open their sweet-scented flowers under the first warm gleams of the spring sunshine, the snake ventures forth from his hole to bask on the south side of the bank. In looking for violets it is not unusual to hear a rustling of the dead leaves that still strew the ground, and to see the pointed tail of a snake being dragged after him under cover.

In February there are sometimes a few days of warm weather (about the last week), and a solitary snake may perhaps chance to crawl forth ; but they are not generally visible till later, and, if it be a cold spring, remain torpid till the wind changes. When the hedges have grown green, and the sun, rising higher in the sky, raises the temperature, even though clouds be passing over, the snakes appear regularly, but even then not till the sun has been up some hours.

Later on they may occasionally be found coiled up in a circle, two together, on the bank.

In the summer some of them appear of great thickness—almost as big round as the wrist. These are the females, and are about to deposit their eggs. They may usually be noticed close to cowyards. The cattle in summer graze in the fields, and the sheds are empty ; but there are large manure heaps overgrown with weeds, and in these the snakes' eggs are left. Rabbits are fond of visiting these cowyards—many of which are at a distance from the farmstead—and sometimes bring forth a litter there.

When the mowers have laid the tall grass in swathes snakes are often found on them or under them by the haymakers, whose prongs or forks throw the grass about to expose a large surface to the sun. The haymakers kill them without mercy, and numbers thus meet with their fate. They vary very much in size—from eighteen inches to three feet in length. I have seen specimens which could not have been less than four feet long, and as thick as a rake handle. That would be an exceptional case, but not altogether rare. The labourers will tell you of much larger snakes, but I never saw one.

There is no subject, indeed, upon which they make such extraordinary statements, evidently believing what they say, as about snakes. A man told me once that he had been pursued by a snake, which rushed after him at such a speed that he could barely escape ; the snake not only glided but actually leaped over the ground. Now this must have been pure imagination : he fancied he saw an adder, and fled, and in his terror thought himself pursued. They constantly state that they have seen adders ; but I am confident that no viper exists in this district, nor for some miles round. That they do elsewhere of course is well known, but not here ; neither is the slow-worm ever seen.

The belief that snakes can jump—or coil themselves up and spring—is, however, very prevalent. They all tell you that a snake can leap across a ditch. This is not true. A snake, if alarmed, will make for the hedge; and he glides much faster than would be supposed. On reaching the “shore” or edge of the ditch he projects his head over it, and some six or eight inches of the neck, while the rest of the body slides down the slope. If it happens to be a steep-sided ditch, he often loses his balance, and rolls to the bottom; and that is what has been mistaken for leaping. As he rises up the mound he follows a zigzag course, and presently enters some small hole or a cavity in a decaying stole. After creeping in some distance he often meets with an obstruction, and has to remain half in and half out till he can force his way. He usually takes possession of a mouse-hole and does not seem to be able to enlarge it for additional convenience. If you put your stick on his head as he slips through the grass, his body rolls and twists, and almost ties itself in a knot.

I have never been able to find a snake in the actual process of divesting his body of the old skin, but have several times disturbed them from a bunch of grass and found the slough in it. There was an old wall, very low and somewhat ruinous, much overgrown with barley-like grasses, where I found a slough several times in succession, as if it had been a favourite resort for the purpose. The slough is a pale colour; there is no trace on it of the snake's natural hue, and it has when fresh an appearance as if varnished—meaning not the brown colour of varnish, but the smoothness. A thin transparent film represents the eyes, so that the country folk say the snake skins his own eyes.

A forked stick is the best thing to catch a snake with: the fork pins the head to the ground without doing any injury. If held up by the tail—that is the way the country lads carry them—the snake will not

let its head hang down, but holds it up as far as possible ; he does not, however, seem able to crawl up himself, so to say—he is helpless in that position. If he is allowed to touch the arm he immediately coils round it. A snake is sometimes found on the roofs of cottages. The roof in such cases is low, and connected by a mass of ivy with the ground, overgrown too with moss and weeds.

The mowers, who sleep a good deal under the hedges, have a tradition that a snake will sometimes crawl down a man's throat if he sleeps on the ground with his mouth open. There is also a superstition among the haymakers of snakes having been bred in the stomachs of human beings, from drinking out of ponds or streams frequented by water snakes. Such snakes—green, and in every respect like the field snake—have, according to them, been vomited by the unfortunate persons afflicted with this strange calamity. It is curious to note in connection with this superstition the ignorance of the real habits of these creatures exhibited by people whose whole lives are spent in the fields and by the hedges.

Now and then a peculiar squealing sound may be heard proceeding from the grass ; on looking about it is found to be made by a frog in the extremity of mortal terror. A snake has seized one of its hind legs and has already swallowed a large part of it. The frog struggles and squeals, but it is in vain ; the snake, if once he takes hold, will gradually get him down. I have several times released frogs from this horrible position ; they hop off apparently unhurt if only the leg has been swallowed. But on one occasion I found a frog quite half gone down the throat of its dread persecutor. I compelled the snake to disgorge it, but the frog died soon afterwards. The frog being a broad creature, wide across the back—at least twice the width of the snake—it appears surprising how the snake can absorb so large a thing.

In the nesting season snakes are the terror of those birds that build in low bushes. I have never seen a snake in a tree (though I have heard of their getting up trees), but I have seen them in hawthorn bushes several feet from the ground, and apparently proceeding along the boughs with ease. I once found one in a bird's nest: the nest was empty—the snake had doubtless had a feast, and was enjoying deglutition. In some places where snakes are numerous, boys when bird's-nesting always give the nest a gentle thrust with a stick first before putting the hand in, lest they should grasp a snake instead of eggs. The snake is also accused of breaking and sucking eggs—some say it is the hard-set eggs he prefers; whether that be so or no, eggs are certainly often found broken and the yolk gone. When the young fledglings fall out of the nest on to the ground they run great risks from snakes.

When sitting in a punt in summer, moored a hundred yards or more from shore, I have often watched a snake swim across the lake, in that place about three hundred yards wide. In the distance all that is visible is a small black spot moving steadily over the water. This is the snake's head, which he holds above the surface, and which vibrates a little from side to side with the exertions of the muscular body. As he comes nearer a slight swell undulates on each side, marking his progress. Snakes never seem to venture so far from shore except when it is perfectly calm. The movement of the body is exactly the same as on land—the snake glides over the surface, the bends of its body seeming to act like a screw. They go at a good pace, and with the greatest apparent ease. In walking beside the meadow brooks, not everywhere, but in localities where these reptiles are common, every now and then you may see a snake strike off from the shore and swim across, twining in and out the stems of the green flags till he reaches the aquatic grass on the mud and disappears among it.

One warm summer's day I sat down on the sward under an oak, and leaned my gun against it, intending to watch the movements of a pair of woodpeckers who had young close by. But the drowsy warmth induced slumber, and on waking—probably after the lapse of some time—I found a snake coiled on the grass under one of my legs. I kept perfectly still, being curious to see what the snake would do. He watched me with his keen eyes as closely as I watched him. So long as there was absolute stillness he remained; the moment I moved, out shot his forked black tongue, and away he went into the ditch as rapidly as possible.

Some country people say they can ascertain if a hedge is frequented by snakes by a peculiar smell: it is certain that if one is killed, especially if worried by a dog, there is an unpleasant odour. That they lie torpid during the winter is generally understood; but though I have kept an eye on the grubbing of many hedges for the purpose of observing what was found, I never saw a snake disturbed from his winter sleep. But that may be accounted for by their taking alarm at the jar and vibration of the earth under the strokes of the axe at the tough roots of thorn stoles and ash, and so getting away. Besides which it is likely enough that these particular hedges may not have been favourite localities with them. They are said to eat mice, and to enter dairies sometimes for the milk spilt on the flagstones of the floor. They may often be found in the furrows in the meadows, which act as surface drains and are damp.

Frogs have some power of climbing. I have found them on the roofs of outhouses which were covered with ivy; they must have got up the ivy. Their toes are, indeed, to a certain degree prehensile, and they can cling with them. They sometimes make a low sound while in the ivy on such roofs; to my ear it sounds like a hoarse "coo." Cats occasionally catch frogs by the leg, and torment them, letting the creature

go only to seize it again, and finally devouring it. The wretched creature squeals with pain and terror exactly as when caught by a snake.

No surer sign of coming rain than the appearance of the toad on the garden paths is known. Many cottage folk will tell you that the hundreds and hundreds of tiny frogs, which may sometimes be seen quite covering the ground, fall from the sky, notwithstanding the fact that they do not appear during the rain, but a short time afterwards. And there are certain places where such crowds of these creatures may be oftener found than elsewhere. I knew one such place ; it was a gateway where the clayey soil for some way round the approach had been trampled firm by the horses and cattle. This gateway was close to a slowly running brook, so slow as to be all but stagnant. Here I have seen legions of them on several occasions, all crowding on the ground worn bare of grass, as if they preferred that to the herbage.

Newts seem to prefer stagnant or nearly stagnant ponds, and are rarely seen in running water. Clay-pits from whence clay has been dug for brick-making, and which are now full of water, are often frequented by them, as also by frogs in almost innumerable numbers in spring, when their croaking can be heard fifty yards away when it is still.

Labourers say that sometimes in grubbing out the butt of an old tree—previously sawn down—they have found a toad in a cavity of the solid wood, and look upon it as a great wonder. But such old trees are often hollow at the bottom, and the hollows communicate with the ditch, so that the toad probably had no difficulty of access. The belief in the venom of the toad is still current, and some will tell you that they have had sore places on their hands from having accidentally touched one.

They say, too, that an irritated snake, if it cannot escape, will strike at the hand and bite, though harm-

less. Snakes will, indeed, twist round a threatening stick ; and, as it is evidently a motion induced by anger, the question arises whether they have some power of constriction. If so, it is slight. In summer a few snakes may always be found by the stream that runs through the fields near Wick Farm.

This brook, like many others, in its downward course is checked at irregular intervals by hatches, built for the purpose of forcing water out into the meadows, or up to ponds at some distance from the stream at which the cattle in the sheds drink. Sometimes the water is thus led up to a farmstead ; sometimes the farmstead is situate on the very banks of the brook, and the hatch is within a few yards. Besides the movable hatches, the stream in many places is crossed by bays (formed of piles and clay), which either irrigate adjacent meads or keep the water in ponds at a convenient level.

A lonely moss-grown hatch, which stands in a quiet shady corner not far from the lake, is a favourite resort of the kingfishers. Though these brilliantly coloured birds may often be seen skimming across the surface of the mere, they seem to obtain more food from the brooks and ponds than from the broader expanse of water above. In the brooks they find overhanging branches upon which to perch and watch for their prey, and without which they can do nothing. In the lake the only places where such boughs can be found are the shallow stretches where the bottom is entirely mud, and where the water is almost hidden by weeds. Willows grow there in great quantities, and some of their branches may be available ; but then the water is hidden by weeds, and, being muddy at bottom, is not frequented by the shoals of roach the kingfisher delights to watch. So that the best places to look for this bird are on the streams which feed the mere (especially just where they enter it, for there the fish often assemble), and the streams that issue forth, not far from the main water.

This old hatch—it is so old and rotten that it is a little dangerous to cross it—is situate in the latter position, on the effluent, and is almost hidden by trees and bushes. Several hedges there meet, and form a small cover, in the midst of which flows the dark brook; but do not go near carelessly, for the bank is undermined by the water itself, and by the water-rats, while the real edge is concealed by long coarse grasses. These water-rats are for ever endangering the bay: they bore their holes at the side through the bank from above and emerge below the hatch. Out of one such hole the water is now rushing, and if it is not soon stopped will wear away the soil and escape in such quantities as to lower the level behind the hatch. These little beaver-like creatures are not, therefore, welcome near hatches and dams.

If you approach the cover quietly and step over the decayed pole that has been placed to close a gap, by carefully parting the bushes the kingfisher may be seen in his favourite position. The old pole must not be pressed in getting over it, or the willow bonds or withes with which it is fastened to a tree each side of the gap will creak, and the pole itself may crack, and so alarm the bird. The kingfisher perches on the narrow rail that crosses the hatch about two feet above the water.

Another perch to which he removes now and then is formed by a branch, dead and leafless, which projects across a corner of the bubbling pool below. He prefers a rail or a dead branch, because it gives him a clearer view and better facilities for diving and snatching up his prey as it swims underneath him. His azure back and wings and ruddy breast are not equalled in beauty of colour by any bird native to this country. The long pointed beak looks half as long as the whole bird: his shape is somewhat wedge-like, enlarging gradually from the point of the beak backwards. The cock-bird has the brightest tints.

In this pool, scooped out by the falling water, swim

roach, perch, and sticklebacks, and sometimes a jack; but the jack usually abides near the edge out of the swirl. Roach are here the kingfisher's most common prey. He chooses those about four inches long by preference, and "daps" on them the moment they come near enough to the surface. But he will occasionally land a much larger fish, perhaps almost twice the size, and will carry it to some distance, being remarkably powerful on the wing for so small a bird. The fish is held across the beak, but in flying it sometimes seems to be held almost vertically; and if that really is the case, and not an illusion caused by the swiftness of the flight, the bird must carry its head then a little on one side. If he is only fishing for his own eating, he does not carry his prey farther than a clear place on the bank. A terrace made by the runs of the water-rat is a common table for him, or the path leading to the hatch where it is worn smooth and bare by footsteps. But he prefers to devour his fish either close to the water or in a somewhat open place, and not too near bushes, because while thus on the ground he is not safe. When feeding his young he will carry a fish apparently as long as himself a considerable distance.

One summer I went several days in succession to a hedge two fields distant from the nearest brook, and hid on the mound with a gun. I had not been there long before a kingfisher flew past, keeping just clear of the hedge, but low down and close under the boughs of the trees, and going in a direction which would not lead to a brook or pond. This seemed curious; but presently he came back again, uttering the long whistle which is his peculiar note. About an hour, perhaps less, elapsed when he returned again, this time carrying something in his beak that gleamed white and silvery in the sun—a fish. The next day it was the same, and the next. The kingfisher, or rather two of them, went continually to and fro, and it was astonishing what a number of fish they took. Never more than an hour,

often less, elapsed without one or other going by. The fish varied much in size, sometimes being very small.

They had a nest, of course, somewhere ; but, being under the idea that they always built near brooks or in the high banks often seen at the back of ponds, it was difficult for me to imagine where the nest could be. To all appearance they flew straight through a small opening in another hedge, at the corner of the two, in fact, about two hundred yards distant. Presently it occurred to me that this might be an illusion ; that the birds did not really pass through the hedge, but had a nest somewhere in that corner.

Just in the very angle was an old disused sawpit, formed by enlarging the ditch, and made some years before for the temporary convenience of sawing up a few heavy "sticks" of timber that were thrown thereabouts. The sawpit, to prevent accidents to cattle, was roughly covered over with slabs of wood, which practically roofed it in, and of course darkened the interior. It was in this sawpit that the kingfishers had their nest, in what appeared to be a hole partly excavated by a rabbit. The distance from the hatch and brook was about four hundred yards, so that the parent birds had to carry the fish they captured nearly a quarter of a mile. The sawpit, too, was close to a lane used a good deal, though sheltered by a thick hedge from the observation of those who passed.

In another case I knew of the kingfishers built in a mound overhanging a small stagnant and muddy pond in which there were no fish, and which was within twenty paces of a farmhouse. The house was situate on a hill about three hundred yards from the nearest running stream. This little pond was full in wet weather only, and was constantly used by the horses, the cattle in the field that came up almost to the door, and by the tame ducks. Beside the pond was a wood pile, and persons were constantly passing it to and fro. Yet the kingfishers built there and reared their young.

and this not only for one season, but for several years in succession. They had to bring all the fish they captured up from the brook, over the garden, and to pass close to the house. Why they should choose such a place is not easily explained, seeing that so many apparently more suitable localities were open to them along the course of the stream.

One summer I found a family of four young kingfishers perched in a row on a dead branch crossing a brook which ran for some distance beside a double-mound hedge. There was a hatch just there too, forcing the water into two ponds, one each side of the mound. The brook had worn itself a deep channel, and so required a hatch to bring it up to a level convenient for cattle. I had known for some time that there was a nest in that mound from the continued presence of two old birds, but could not find it. But when the young could fly a little they appeared on this branch projecting over the falling water, and there they took up their station day after day. Every now and then the parents came with small fish, which they caught farther down the brook, for just in that place there were only a few perch and perhaps a tench or two. The colours are much less brilliant on the young birds, and they do not obtain the deep rich hues of their parents until the following spring. In the winter they are much improved in colour, but may be distinguished without difficulty from the full-grown bird.

Though so swift, the kingfisher flies as straight as an arrow, and when disturbed almost invariably flies off in one favourite direction; and this habit has often proved fatal to him, because the sportsman knows which way to look, and carries his gun prepared. Wherever the kingfisher's haunt may be, he will be found upon observation to leave it nearly always in the same direction day after day. He is, indeed, a bird with fixed habits, though apparently wandering aimlessly along the streams. I soon found it possible to

predict beforehand in which haunt a kingfisher would be discovered at any time.

By noting the places frequented by these birds you know where the shoals of small fish lie, and may supply yourself with bait for larger fish. Often one of these great hawthorn bushes that hang over a brook is a favourite spot. The roots of trees and bushes loosen the soil, and deeper holes are often found under them than elsewhere, to which the fish resort. These hawthorn bushes, though thick and impenetrable above, are more open below just over the water; and there the kingfisher perches, and has also the advantage of being completely hidden from observation; if he only remained still in such places he would escape notice altogether. When passing such a bush on the *qui vive* for snipe, how many times have I seen a brilliant streak of azure shoot out from the lower branches and watched a kingfisher skim across the meadow, rising with a piping whistle over the distant hedge! Near mill-ponds is a favourite place with these birds.

To that hatch which stands on the effluent brook not far from the mere a coot or two comes now and then at night or in the early morning. These birds, being accused of devouring the young fry, are killed whenever they are met, and their eggs taken, in order to prevent their increase; that is, of course, where the water is carefully preserved. Here they are not so persistently hunted. I have seen coots, and moorhens too, venture some distance up the dark arch of a culvert. Moorhens are fond of bridges, and frequently feed under them. When alarmed, after diving, the moorhen does not always come right up to the surface, but merely protrudes its head to breathe.

One day I startled a moorhen in a shallow pond; instantly the bird dived, and I watched to see where it would come up, knowing that the moorhen cannot stay long under water, while there chanced to be scarcely any bushes or cover round the edge. After waiting

some time, and wondering what had become of the bird, I fancied I saw some duckweed slightly agitated. Looking more carefully, it seemed as if there was something very small moving now and then just there—the spot was not more than fifteen yards distant. It was as if the beak of a bird, the body and most of the head quite hidden under water, were picking or feeding among the duckweed. This continued for some minutes, when I shot at the spot, and immediately a moorhen rose to the surface. As the pond was very shallow, the bird must have stood on the bottom, and so resumed its feeding with the beak just above the surface.

DEAN HOLE

[Samuel Reynolds Hole, Dean of Rochester, was a keen gardener and a great lover of flowers, especially of roses. His *Book about Roses* has gone through over twenty editions. His *Little Tour in Ireland* was illustrated by his friend, John Leech.]

THE ORIGIN OF THE NATIONAL ROSE SHOW

RETURNING from the woods and the fields, we find those dear little gardens at home wherein we planted the twig, and were annoyed next morning to see no signs of foliage; sowed the melon seed, and were disappointed because, unlike Jonah's gourd, it grew not up in a night. The doll's house (the door of which occupied the entire frontage, the architect having forgotten the stairs) stood centrally at the upper end of our domain, representing the family mansion; "the gardener," a tin soldier in full uniform with fixed bayonet, spent most of his time lying on his stomach, his form being fragile and the situation windy; and the fishponds were triumphs of engineering skill.

Mine was a metal pan, which had been formerly used for culinary purposes, placed in an excavation prepared for it, and containing a real fish, about the size of a whitebait, and caught by hand in the brook hard by. One of my sisters produced, I must confess, a more brilliant effect with some bits of looking-glass, but they lacked the gracefulness of Nature and the charm of reality. The grotto, an oyster-barrel placed on its side, and tastefully ornamented with broken pieces of ivy and other evergreens, contained the wives of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, taken from our ark, and attended by a dog, a cat, and a parrot. They remained in a perpendicular position night and day, and had a fine effect. . . .

I dwell upon these adjuncts to horticulture rather than upon the produce of the soil, because in the latter department we did not attain a like success. We were not on the best of terms with our gardener—the real gardener, not the tin soldier—and he would not help us. Our ways (over the flower-beds) were not his ways, and he objected to the promiscuous use of his syringe and the premature removal of his fruit. We differed, again, on the subject of transplanting. It seemed to us an easier and more satisfactory process to transfer specimens in full beauty from his garden to our own, rather than to watch their tardy growth and tedious efflorescence. Unhappily for us, the specimens themselves did not seem to like it, and we were finally forbidden by parental authority to continue our importations.

We obeyed cheerfully, for we loved the flowers, though we had erred as to their treatment—loved them from the first snowdrop to the last Christmas rose, from the flowering trees and shrubs to the “bachelor’s buttons” and “fairy” roses, which almost rested on the soil.

“The child is father to the man,” and I, to whom was granted in after years the privilege of suggesting

and organizing the First National Rose Show, presided in my childhood at a floral exhibition of which my little sister was the general and executive committee. A few petals of pansies, roses, etc., were spread upon paper and covered with the largest piece of broken glass which we could find (the idea was taken from dried flowers in an old scrap-book), and then, when the edges of the paper were turned over the glass, we called it a "Flower Show," and the servants said it was "beautiful !"

JOHN LEECH ON THE HUNTING-FIELD

ON the hunting-field Leech was a most delectable companion, when he had a gentle, tranquil steed, and hounds were not running. No incident or object of interest escaped his keen observation. He directed attention to circumstances which were exceptional, characteristics which were quaint, things beautiful or ugly, where ordinary eyes saw nothing worthy of notice. I remember, in proof, that, as we were going from covert to covert, it was necessary to negotiate an ordinary fence. "Now," he said to me, "there is no hurry, nothing to fire your inflammatory spirit ; wait awhile here and watch. You shall see that no two men, women, or boys, no two horses or ponies, will go through this performance, which seems so simple, in the same temper and style." His prophecy was exactly fulfilled. Some men gathered themselves and their bridles together, gripped their steeds, put their feet farther through their stirrups, pressed their hats more tightly, and charged the obstacle, as though they rode to battle. Some held a loose and some a tightened rein. Some used the whip, and some the spur. Some were silent, and some addressed their animals with brief words of encouragement. Some kept their seat, and some rose so high as to open out an extensive view of

the distant landscape between themselves and their saddles. The horse and rider who knew their business went, the pace imperceptibly quickened, with serene confidence to the leap. The quadrupeds, like the bipeds, showed signal diversities of form. Some covered a foot higher than the hedge, and covered four times the necessary space. Some cleared it, and that was all. Some broke it with their hind legs, to the intense gratification of the timid, who were rendered yet more happy when an excited four-year-old or a blundering underbred brute went through it with a crash. Some suddenly refused, and then, if the rider was without experience, it was a case of "stand and deliver."

KATHARINE TYNAN HINKSON

[Mrs. Katharine Tynan Hinkson was brought up in a low thatched farmhouse near Dublin. She has published several volumes of verse and more than a score of novels. A writer in the *Athenæum*, reviewing *A Cluster of Nuts*, said: "Her prose, like her verse, is near to the heart of Nature, sweet with the smell of fresh grass and flowering thorn, and warm with a tender sympathy that embraces all things that live and die."]

THE CHOICE

WHEN skies are blue and days are bright
 A kitchen-garden's my delight,
 Set round with rows of decent box
 And blowsy girls of hollyhocks.

Before the Lark his Lauds hath done
 And ere the corncrake's southward gone ;
 Before the thrush good-night hath said
 And the young Summer's put to bed,

The currant-bushes' spicy smell,
Homely and honest, likes me well,
The while on strawberries I feast,
And raspberries the sun hath kissed.

Beans all a-blowing by a row
Of hives that great with honey go,
With mignonette and heaths to yield
The plundering bee his honey-field.

Sweet herbs in plenty, blue borage
And the delicious mint and sage,
Rosemary, marjoram, and rue,
And thyme to scent the winter through.

Here are small apples growing round,
And apricots all golden-gowned,
And plums that presently will flush
And show their bush a Burning Bush.

Cherries in nets against the wall,
Where Master Thrush his madrigal
Sings, and makes oath a churl is he
Who grudges cherries for a fee.

Lavender, sweet-briar, orris. Here
Shall Beauty make her pomander,
Her sweet-balls for to lay in cloths
That wrap her as the leaves the rose.

Take roses red and lilies white,
A kitchen-garden's my delight ;
Its gillyflowers and phlox and cloves
And its tall cote of irised doves.

VISCOUNT GREY

[Doubtless there were mighty fishermen long before the days of Walton. Certainly there have been many since. The following pages, written two hundred and fifty years after *The Compleat Angler*, reveal the same life-long devotion to the sport which Walton felt. The extract is from *Fly-Fishing*, by Viscount Grey, whose arduous labours as a statesman never diminished his intense love of the countryside.]

ANOTHER WORLD

VERY wonderful is the perspective of childhood, which can make a small burn seem greater than rivers in after life. There was one burn which I knew intimately from its source to the sea. Much of the upper part was wooded, and it was stony and shallow, till within two miles of its mouth. Here there was for a child another world. There were no trees, the bottom of the burn was of mud or sand, and the channel was full of rustling reeds, with open pools of some depth at intervals. These pools had a fascination for me; there was something about them which kept me excited with expectation of great events, as I lay behind the reeds, peering through them, and watching the line intently. The result of much waiting was generally an eel, or a small flat-fish up from the sea, or now and then a small trout, but never for many years one of the monsters which I was sure must inhabit such mysterious pools. At last one evening something heavy really did take the worm. The fish kept deep, played round and round the pool and could not be seen, but I remember shouting to a companion at a little distance, that I had hooked a trout of one pound, and being conscious from the tone of his reply that he didn't in the least believe me, for a trout of one pound

was in those days our very utmost limit of legitimate expectation. There was a millpond higher up in which such a weight had been attained, and we who fished the burn could talk of trout of that size, and yet feel that we were speaking like anglers of this world. But this fish turned out to be heavier even than one pound, and when at last he came up from the depth into my view, I felt that the great moment had come which was to make or mar my happiness for ever. I got into the shallow water below the fish, and after great anxieties secured with the help of my hand a fresh-run sea trout of three pounds. Never was a dead fish treated with more care and honour. It had swallowed the hooks, and rather than risk spoiling its appearance in getting them out, the gut was cut and they were left inside. The small trout and eels and flounders were turned out of my basket and put into my companion's, so that the great sea trout might lie in state. It was felt that the expectation of years was justified, that the marvellous had become real, that the glory which had been unseen was revealed, and that after the present moment the hope of great things in the future would live for ever. A few years ago there was published a delightful book called *The Golden Age*, in which the author describes the world of childhood as it has been to all of us—a world whose boundaries are unknown, where everything is at the same time more wonderful and more real than it seems afterwards, and where mystery is our most constant companion. So it was with me, especially in the places where I fished. I used to go to the lower part of this burn in the charge of an old gamekeeper, and after a long journey through pathless open fields, we seemed to reach a distant land where things happened otherwise than in the world nearer home. At the end of the walk it was as if we had reached another country, and were living in another day under a different sky. The gamekeeper fished more leisurely than I, and

sometimes he would be lost amongst the windings of the burn, to be found again by the sight of the smoke from his pipe rising gently from behind a whin-bush. When I now recall that distant land, I see always somewhere amongst the whin-bushes a little curl of thin smoke, and no other sign of an inhabitant.

W. H. HUDSON

[William Henry Hudson, born in South America in 1842, is the greatest of all modern writers on bird life. To an unsurpassed knowledge of birds, based on long and loving study, he adds a charm of literary style seldom met, being in this respect decidedly superior to Jefferies. His best known works are *Birds in a Village* (from which the extract below is taken), *Birds and Men*, and *British Birds*. In *Far Away and Long Ago* he tells the story of his early life in South America. He died in 1922.]

THE YOUNG CUCKOO

ON the morning of June 27th I was out sauntering very indolently, thinking of nothing at all ; for it was a surpassingly brilliant day, and the sunshine produced the effect of a warm, lucent, buoying fluid, in which I seemed to float rather than walk—a celestial water, which, like the more ponderable and common kind of water, may sometimes be both felt and seen. The sensation of feeling it is somewhat similar to that experienced by a bather standing breast-deep in a clear green, warm, tropical sea ; but to distinguish it with the eye you must look away to a distance of some yards in an open unshaded place, when it will become visible as fine glinting lines, quivering and serpentine, ing upwards, fountain wise, from the surface. All at once I was startled by hearing the loud importunate

hunger-call of a young cuckoo quite close to me. Moving softly up to the low hedge and peering over it, I saw the bird perched on a long cross-stick, which had been put up in a cottage garden to hang clothes on; he was not more than three to four yards from me, a fine young cuckoo in perfect plumage, his barred under-surface facing me. Although seeing me as plainly as I saw him, he exhibited no fear, and did not stir. Why should he, since I had not come there to feed him, and, to his inexperienced avian mind, was only one of the huge terrestrial creatures of various forms that move heavily about in roads and pastures, and are nothing to birds? But his foster-parent, a hedge-sparrow, was suspicious, and kept at some distance with food in her bill; but very soon, excited by his imperative note, she flitted shyly to him, and deposited a minute caterpillar in his great gaping yellow mouth. It was like dropping a bun into the monstrous red mouth of the hippopotamus of the Zoological Gardens. But the hedge-sparrow was off and back again with a second morsel in a very few moments; and again and again she darted away in quest of food and returned successful, while the lazy beautiful giant sat sunning himself on his cross-stick and hungrily cried for more.

COUNTRY RHYMES

THE CUCKOO

Usual Version

Cuckoo comes in April,
Sings his songs in May :
Changes tune
In the middle of June,
And then he flies away.

Lincolnshire Version

In April come he will,
 In May he prepares to stay,
 In June he changes his tune,
 In July he prepares to fly,
 In August go he must.

Old West Country Version

In March he sits on his perch,
 In April he tunes his bell,
 In May he sings all day,
 In June he changes tune,
 In July away he fly,
 In August go he must.

ST. SWITHIN AND ST. BARTHOLOMEW

(July 15th and August 24th)

ST. SWITHIN's day if it do rain
 For forty days it will remain.

* *

St. Bartholomew
 Brings the cold dew.

* *

All the tears St. Swithin doth cry,
 St. Bartholomew's mantle wipes them dry.

MARCH

A PECK of March dust
 Is worth a king's ransom.

* *

As many misties in March
 So many frosties in May.

MAY

A COLD May and a windy
A full barn will find ye.

JUNE

A DRIPPING June
Keeps all in tune.

BEES

A SWARM of bees in May
Is worth a load of hay.
A swarm of bees in June
Is worth a silver spoon.
A swarm of bees in July
Is not worth a fly.

FROST IN NOVEMBER

If November bringeth
Ice to bear a duck,
Naught will follow after
Save slush and muck.

IVY

WHERE ivy embraceth a tree very sore,
Kill ivy, or tree will addle * no more.

* Thrive.

SIGNS

A RED sky at night
Is the shepherd's delight.
A red sky in morning
Is the shepherd's warning.

ENVOI

As within a landskip that doth stand,
Wrought by the pencil of some curious hand,
We may descry, here meadow, there a wood :
Here standing ponds, and there a running flood :
There on a hill a swaine pipes out the day,
Out-braving all the quiristers of May.
A huntsman here follows his cry of hounds,
Driving the hare along the fallow grounds :
Whilst one at hand, seeming the sport t' allow,
Follows the hounds and careless leaves the plow.
There in another place some high-rai'd land
In pride bears out her breasts unto the strand.
Here stands a bridge, and there a conduit-head :
Here round a May-pole some the measures tread :
There boys the truant play and leave their book :
Here stands an angler with a baited hook.
There for a stag one lurks within a bough :
Here sits a maiden milking of her cow . . .
And all of these, in shadows so exprest,
Make the beholder's eyes to take no rest.

WILLIAM BROWNE of Tavistock: *Britannia's
Pastorals, Book I., Song ii.* (1591-1643).

QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

which may serve as aids to appreciation, or which
may be neglected at the Reader's Pleasure

Thomas Campion

(1) Set out the distinctively rustic features of this short poem. Note that the pleasures recorded spring from the rural setting, not from the companionship of the pair.

(2) Compare with such a poem as Burns's *John Anderson*.

(3) Observe that the mirth is spontaneous, not born of deep reflection. Compare the first extract from Shakespeare.

William Shakespeare

(1) In the Duke's speech, is there enjoyment of rural life for its own sake? Analyse the passage carefully, and note that the significance of the whole lies chiefly in the last three lines.

(2) In the incidents recalled by Lorenzo and Jessica, what emotions predominate? Does it appear reasonable to suppose that "such a night" would produce such feelings?

(3) Which of the songs quoted expresses the purest delight in Nature? Justify your selection.

(4) Why should weary sovereigns covet the life of a shepherd rather than that of a ploughman? (Compare Cromwell's last speech to his Parliament, Feb. 4, 1658.) Read the poem of Barnes, *The Shepherd of the Farm*. Is the spirit the same?

Francis Bacon

(1) Make a list of the flowers mentioned here. It is rather an astonishing list for so brief a passage.

(2) Is there here the spirit of true delight in flowers as flowers, or is it rather a somewhat utilitarian view of them as sources of perfume necessary in a gentleman's garden?

Robert Herrick

Compare *The Hock-Cart* with Miss Betham-Edwards' *The Harvest Moon* in this anthology. The theme is the same in both, but the breadth of England and two hundred years of time separate them.

John Milton

(1) Compare the flower-passage here with that quoted from Shakespeare. Is the spirit the same? If so, how comes it that the austere Puritan views the flowers with the same eye as the universal Shakespeare?

(2) Search out passages of rural delight in *L'Allegro*. Read also the description of Eden in *Paradise Lost*, Book IV.

Izaak Walton

(1) What qualities are there in Walton's work which leads those who have never handled a rod to read him?

(2) Venator gave Piscator a day's hunting. Yet he did not assume the air of a Master towards a Scholar. Why, then, should Piscator do so?

(3) Point out examples of Walton's quiet humour.

(4) In the extracts given, which is the more finely written? Why?

Daniel Defoe

(1) There is little actual grace of writing here. Yet the story has attractions. Why? What are the missing elements that prevent the story gripping like Walton's tale of the Frog.

(2) It is interesting to compare this story with Defoe's account of Robinson Crusoe's cats and parrot. Suggest a parallel.

(3) Why is Defoe's phrase, "If this story be true," rather astonishing coming from such a writer?

James Thomson

(1) Note that Thomson's general picture of *Winter* is somewhat heavy and saddening. What features in the extract quoted suggest this?

(2) Is the sudden change from the bird life of the Downs to that of the seashore wise or justifiable?

(3) Note the passage on rooks. Read Jefferies' account of rooks and comment on Thomson's lines.

(4) The passage on the Robin enlivens and quickens the whole account. Does the metre correspond? Is Thomson's picture a faithful one?

Gilbert White

(1) From the description given, does the parish of Selborne appear to possess any special advantages for the study of Natural History?

(2) In the extract on *The Flight of Birds* White shows a considerable degree of literary grace. Note the skilful contrasts. Make a list of these. What other vigorous features may be found? Occasionally there is a painful drop to the obvious and bald. Give examples.

(3) Note the terse vigour of his account of *The Raven Tree*. Account for this, and quote particularly telling phrases.

(4) From the extract on Owls show how great a use White had made of his "own narrow sphere."

(5) White was a modest man. Illustrate this from the extracts given.

(6) He delighted in anecdotes of animal life. Compare Stanley's *Familiar History of Birds*, and from that source select similar incidents.

(7) Is it likely that White carried out his declared intention of abandoning the study of Natural History? Justify your reply.

William Cowper

(1) Is Cowper delighted with the Oak as an object of beauty, or only as a background for moral reflections?

(2) Was his spirit typical of his age? Compare Dyer's *Grongar Hill* with Gray's *Elegy*.

(3) Compare Wordsworth's sonnet beginning "Degenerate Douglas! . . ."

William Gilpin

(1) Justify, or refute, the statement that Gilpin wrote of natural scenery "with the eye of a landscape painter."

(2) Note the contrast between the reasoned descriptions in the last paragraph and the gorgeous word-picture that precedes it. Which is the more pleasing? Why?

George Crabbe

(1) What passages quoted here bear out the statement that Crabbe was "Nature's sternest painter"?

(2) In his picture of the Fen, note how Crabbe utilizes all the objects, even the flowers, to create the desired effect. Are his characterizations of the flowers justifiable?

(3) There is a particularly charming and intimate rural touch in the extract on Autumn. What is it?

Robert Burns

(1) How does this poem illustrate the poet's tenderness of spirit?

(2) Quote other examples from his works.

(3) Compare the spirit of this poem with Tennyson's *Flower in the Crannied Wall*.

Joanna Baillie

(1) Illustrate by quotations these points: (a) The absence of any surpassing beauty of phrase; (b) the admirable vigour of the poem; (c) the charming fidelity of the painting; (d) the pertinent and arresting similes.

(2) Do you consider the poem merits inclusion in the book? If so, give reasons other than the above.

Robert Bloomfield

(1) Is the phrase "perhaps not a great poet" a just one? Illustrate by quotations.

(2) Show that Bloomfield could paint rural life "with vigour and fidelity."

(3) Note how even such unpromising subjects as a gander delighted Bloomfield. Compare Blackmore's *A Summer Morning*.

(4) Humour is sometimes lacking in writers on rural scenes. Is it lacking in Bloomfield?

James Hogg

(1) Compare this poem with Shelley's *Ode to a Skylark*, as regards ideas and execution.

(2) Are there in Hogg's poem indications of an observation superior to Shelley's?

(3) Do you agree with Hogg's phrase "Bird of the wilderness"?

(4) Note the two 3-time trisyllabic units (two dactyls) in the lines—a measure not at all common in English poetry.

William Cobbett

(1) In the delightful little word-picture on *Woodland Countries* Cobbett refers to trees, flowers, and birds. What touches reveal an intimate knowledge, a sympathetic spirit, and a tender heart?

(2) What similar touches can be found in the next extract?

(3) Give illustrations of Cobbett's caustic humour and his great vigour of phrase.

(4) Read a complete *Ride*, and note how sweet an influence passages such as those quoted breathe over the whole turbulent mass.

William Wordsworth

(1) Observe how Wordsworth interprets the mysterious significance of the Lake.

(2) Seek instances in Wordsworth of the sudden charm

which accidents of light and shade and moving clouds bring over a scene. (In his *Guide to the Lakes* he observes, "Milton, it will be remembered, has given a *clouded* moon to Paradise itself.")

(3) Nature to Wordsworth is a medium whereby man may obtain glimpses of the Unseen World. Note in these passages the presence, or consciously felt absence, of the human element (*cf.* Introduction).

(4) Wordsworth is the Laureate of Childhood as well as of Nature. Note the evidence of his reverence for children in these selections.

John Clare

(1) What passages in these poems illustrate Clare's sweetness of fancy?

(2) Note Clare's graceful humour. Quote instances; compare Barnes.

(3) Our greatest rural writers have all felt a profound sympathy with, and for, the peasants. Cull illustrations from these poems, from other passages in the book, and from other works such as Jefferies' *Toilers of the Field*.

(4) Collect instances of Clare's minute and exact observation of Nature.

Mary Russell Mitford

Note the vigour of this description—in some ways a perfect word-picture. Compare with the sheep-shearing scene in Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Extract other word-pictures from *Our Village*.

George Borrow

(1) Show how these passages illustrate Borrow's reserve, and yet his friendliness with peasants, his melancholy, and his physical vigour.

(2) Borrow was a master of literary dialogue. Read carefully the conversation with the shepherd, and set out its literary features.

(3) Jasper's words express in perfection the feeling of the true Nature-lover. Learn them by heart; seek a parallel.

William Barnes

(1) Under what disadvantages does any poet labour who essays to use a dialect? What poets have triumphed over the obstacles? Consider the saying of Mr. W. B. Yeats: "It is through dialect that we escape from abstract words, back to the sensation inspired directly by the thing itself."

(2) Note the shrewd philosophy in *False Friends-like*. Compare other examples, such as *Good Master Collins*.

(3) These poems are all bright in spirit, yet Barnes at times had a touch of gentle melancholy—never bitterness. See *The Wife a-Lost*, and find other examples.

(4) Note the gentle humour. Quote lines to illustrate, and read also *A Bit o' Sly Coortin'* and *The Waggon a-Stooded*.

(5) Note the detailed touches of rural life. Set out those shown in *The Shepherd* and *Hay-Carrèn*.

Samuel Smiles

(1) The writing here is clear, simple, and direct; yet the merit of the extracts scarcely lies in the literary presentation. In what does it lie?

(2) There are, however, terse and vigorous passages. Quote some.

(3) Show how the love of Nature was inborn in Edward.

(4) Discuss the loss to Natural Science because of Edward's lack of resources and of education.

(5) Select examples illustrating Edward's wonderful powers of observation. Compare Jefferies.

H. D. Thoreau

(1) Did Thoreau love Nature for its own sake, or for its effect on character? Select passages justifying your view.

(2) Thoreau has been charged with being destitute of humour. Is this correct?

(3) Do these extracts show a detailed knowledge of wild life? If not, what qualities make such an extract as *Winter Animals* so admirable?

(4) Note the vivid picture of the battle of the ants. What effect on Thoreau had the sight? Select other equally vivid paragraphs.

R. D. Blackmore

(1) Note the wonderful life, spirit, and fidelity of these extracts. Read others, such as the account of the great frost, the great snowstorm, or the escape of Tom Faggus at the ford.

(2) Blackmore is a master of detail. Carefully study, for example, *The East Wind* and *A Summer Morning*, and set out in a list the details given.

(3) Blackmore has the same kindliness of spirit as is shown by Barnes, Clare, or Bloomfield. Is this a direct result of living in intimate association with Nature?

(4) The spirit of wonder and adoration is never obscured in *Lorna Doone*. Set forth examples.

(5) Blackmore tends at times to fall into a metrical prose. (See, for example, the opening sentence of *Harvest*.) This has been held to be a fault. But is it a fault? It is an enjoyable task to read the book looking for such sentences or passages. You will find many in chapters xxviii., xli., etc.

T. E. Brown

Brown's poetry is full of deep sympathy—with nature, animals, and men—quiet humour, and a rare delicacy of touch. Instances of all three of these can be found in these selections.

Matilda Betham-Edwards

(1) What are the attractive qualities of these extracts?

(2) Note how in *Never no More* the quiet restrained writing does not diminish the poignant anguish of the scene. What are the elements that combine to make this scene so touching?

(3) Recall other examples of a close tie between carters and horses.

Thomas Hardy

(1) Select from this picture of Egdon Heath a host of minute touches which reveal a deep knowledge of such a rural scene.

(2) What are the means by which Hardy secures the sombre colouring of his picture?

(3) Is this picture less true than, say, Blackmore's *A Summer Morning*? Does either represent the whole truth?

(4) With this as a background, what kind of story should be set forth? Read *The Return of the Native*, and consider how far the story and its setting harmonize.

Anna Bunston de Bary

Note the beauty and unexpectedness of the climax to this little poem.

Richard Jefferies

(1) Study carefully the extracts given, in order to realize Jefferies' extraordinary knowledge of the countryside. Select a score of illustrations from the account of rooks.

(2) Make a careful list of all the birds, trees, etc., referred to in these extracts. It will be a surprising list; turn back and compare with similar lists prepared from the extracts from Thoreau's *Walden*.

(3) Do you think Jefferies' explanation of the route pursued by the rooks is convincing?

(4) Write from memory an account of the flight of rooks. You will probably be surprised (and depressed) to find how scanty are the details you can supply. Turn again to Jefferies and re-read his account. Take a country walk, observe carefully rooks in flight, and see how accurate the writer is.

(5) What aspects of rook-life has he left untouched?

(6) Occasionally Jefferies' writing is bald and awkward—never uninteresting. Select such a passage: then set out a passage remarkably telling in its vigour and elegance.

(7) Does one read Jefferies for the same reason that one reads Walton? Justify your reply by illustrations from the extracts given.

(8) Let your New Year's resolution be that you will read at least *Wild Life in a Southern County*, *The Open Air*, and *Toilers of the Field*.

Dean Hole

The second extract (*John Leech on the Hunting Field*) well illustrates the difference between the observation of the artist and that of the naturalist. Compare Leech's manner of observation with (a) William Gilpin and (b) White or Jefferies.

Katharine Tynan Hinkson

There are not many songs in praise of a kitchen garden. Why do you think this one is included in the present book?

Viscount Grey

(1) Note the admirable qualities of this extract—its grace, the vigour of description, the skilful re-creation of a creature moving about "in worlds not realized."

(2) What comparisons can be drawn between this passage and Walton's on trout fishing?

(3) "Very wonderful is the perspective of Childhood." How does the author himself proceed to exemplify this statement?

(4) Which sentence do you think gives the most delicate touch of the whole extract?

W. H. Hudson

(1) What points in this story illustrate Hudson's *loving* study of birds?

(2) Hudson appeared to have an unusual realization of bird and animal psychology. What touches in this story illustrate this?

(3) Read the whole of the charming essay from which this is taken, and note passages that bear out the statement that his writing possesses great literary charm.

(4) Hudson hated to kill any creature, even an adder. (See *The Book of a Naturalist*.) Show how this is distinctly a modern attitude of mind.